

PROTECTING INTERESTS AND PREVENTING WAR:  
AN ANALYSIS OF PACAF FORCE POSTURE ALTERNATIVES

BY

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## APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

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## ABSTRACT

This study addresses an important question: What is the optimal force posture for the US Air Force in the Asia-Pacific? Although current conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine dominate American headlines, the Asia-Pacific deserves greater attention for a number of reasons. The geographic boundaries of US Pacific Command include 52 percent of the earth's surface and over half the world's population. The United States also conducts more international trade with Asia than any other region. Furthermore, the United States has formal security agreements with a number of countries in the area. In recognition of the growing importance of the region, the US Department of Defense has announced an effort to rebalance its forces to the Asia-Pacific. Even though water dominates the region, land-based airpower is an essential part of the US security solution for the Pacific for a number of reasons. First, land-based airpower delivers capabilities that current US carrier-based aviation either cannot provide or cannot provide in sufficient quantity. Second, growing regional missile threats pose great risk for aircraft carriers. Third, in some scenarios, Pacific Command may simply need more airpower than the current US Navy fleet can provide.

The study reasons from the general to the specific. It begins by examining the strategic context in the Asia-Pacific. The rise of China receives specific attention. The author also identifies and describes the regions four most significant potential conflict areas: Taiwan, the Korean Peninsula, the East China Sea, and the South China Sea. The study then moves to the realm of international relations, where it examines three different visions of grand strategy for the Asia-Pacific. The next step incorporates American military strategy to identify defense goals for US forces in the region. The author then presents the Posture Analysis Construct, a mathematical framework that gives structure and rigor to the art of strategy. The final chapter identifies five posture alternatives and examines them using the Posture Analysis Construct. This analysis concludes that Pacific Air Forces should adopt a blended posture that augments its existing main operating bases in Northeast Asia with at least an intermittent presence at austere airfields in Southeast Asia. New austere fields in that area will facilitate presence and communicate US resolve in an area that is currently underserved. Austere fields, coupled with dispersion techniques, offer a resilient, cost-effective way to reintroduce American presence into Southeast Asia without diminishing the strong relationships in Northeast Asia.

Basing arrangements should never be taken for granted. Strategy has many subsets, but posture planning may be the most important. Warfighting schemes, contingency planning, and technology innovations receive more attention; but posture planning is vital because it directly contributes to the protection of interests and the prevention of war. Force presentation is the most tangible form of strategic communication. Actions speak louder than words. Presence reassures allies and communicates resolve to adversaries. To capitalize on these underlying verities, PACAF should begin to expand its presence in Southeast Asia.

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## Introduction

*The Pacific Ocean, its shores, its islands and the vast regions beyond, will become the chief theater of events in the world's great hereafter.*

*William Henry Seward, 1852*

21 January 2025 became another day that will live in infamy. The new US President, inaugurated just one day earlier, wanted good options; but his Secretary of Defense had only bad choices to present. China's attack on Taiwan, its naval blockade of the South China Sea, and its seizure of islands in the East China Sea should not have been a surprise. But thirty-five years of focus on the Middle East had undermined US Asia-Pacific policy. Perpetually distracted by urgent but less important matters elsewhere, American leaders paid only lip service to the Asia-Pacific region despite its vital economic links with the United States and its prominent place in the world economy. The much-publicized 2013 "Pivot" to the Asia-Pacific never really materialized.

The fruits of neglect were bountiful. US Navy (USN) aircraft could reach the contested areas only if aircraft carriers sailed within range of deadly Chinese anti-ship missiles. The US Air Force (USAF) faced similar a similar dilemma. Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, was perfectly situated to influence events in Taiwan and the East China Sea, but its runways and other key facilities were unusable due to repeated strikes from Chinese missiles. In the South China Sea, the Chinese had a major air base on a man-made island, but the Americans had no nearby facility suitably equipped to launch counter attacks. Without the support of airpower and surface seapower, the projection of Army and Marine forces was extremely risky. America faced major power-projection problems in a key economic region, while China began a period of aggressive expansion aimed at expelling Western influence and cementing its dominance of Asia.

The events described in the previous two paragraphs are clearly hypothetical. But if current trends in the US and China continue, there is a real possibility that the history books of the 2050s will contain a scenario resembling the one above. Ongoing conflicts in the Middle East dominate today's American headlines, and defense budgets face serious cuts. Meanwhile, China's military and economic rise is unmistakable, but its intentions are opaque. Many believe the United States is already behind in implementing

an Asia-Pacific strategy to ensure the persistence of American influence and the ongoing protection of its interests in the region. A complete US strategy for the Pacific must have many parts. This thesis is intended to address one of them by answering the following question: What is the optimal posture for the US Air Force in the Asia-Pacific? The goals are to help prevent a situation such as the one described above and, if deterrence fails, to provide future US leaders with acceptable options to respond to aggression.

An analysis of US Air Force basing options for the Pacific *could* begin with descriptions of the options themselves. Such an approach, however, would take the strategic context for granted. Although the overall focus of this thesis is on Air Force capabilities and basing options, the work is framed within the broad challenges of the Pacific to provide context and ensure that the proposed solutions are compatible with grand-strategic priorities. The study reasons from the general to the specific. After describing the strategic environment, the study explores political options for the theater. Next, the argument outlines American goals for its military involvement in the region. Finally, it presents and evaluates Air Force basing and capabilities alternatives. Such a top-down approach is valuable for a study such as this because it helps ensure Air Force solutions fit the Asia-Pacific context and nest properly into an overall strategy.

The present argument is relevant for several reasons. First, the United States has strong economic ties to the region. Second, a number of states in the region have formal defense agreements with the United States. Third, the region is densely populated and heavily militarized. The US Pacific Command (USPACOM) area of responsibility (AOR) contains over half the Earth's population and seven out of ten of the world's largest standing military forces.<sup>1</sup> Fourth, current trends indicate a probable expansion of the USAF's role in the Pacific. The US has professed that it will send more forces to the Pacific in a move originally called the Asia-Pacific Pivot, but now referred to as the "rebalance to the Asia-Pacific."

Land-based airpower is important to PACOM. Land-based airpower delivers capabilities that current US carrier-based aviation either cannot provide or cannot provide in sufficient quantity. Examples include long-range bombers, air-refueling tankers,

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1. USPACOM, "USPACOM Area of Responsibility," <http://www.pacom.mil/AboutUSPACOM/USPACOMAreaofResponsibility.aspx> (accessed 29 January 2015).

stealthy air-to-air fighters, and persistent ISR. Furthermore, growing regional missile threats pose greater risk for aircraft carriers than islands because the latter cannot be sunk. In some scenarios, PACOM may simply need more airpower than the current US Navy fleet can provide. Even though water dominates the region, land-based airpower is an essential part of the US security solution for the Pacific.

In regions dominated by water, basing considerations are critical to successful application of land-based airpower. Where land is scarce, there are fewer airfields from which to operate. Distance limitations govern which capabilities can be applied to conflict areas. The connection between basing and capabilities is at the core of force posture decisions. These decisions establish the menu the combatant commander will choose from during contingency operations. Since the departure of US forces from the Philippines in the early 1990s, the Air Force Pacific presence has been predominantly in Northeast Asia. The rapid rise of China, tensions in the South China Sea, and a new security agreement with the Philippines indicate that change may be in store for the existing USAF posture in the Western Pacific. The subsequent chapters of this study identify and analyze basing and capabilities alternatives that the Air Force and USPACOM should consider.

The argument is developed in four chapters. Chapter 1, “Challenges to America’s Enduring Interests in the Pacific,” provides context by describing the strategic environment. A review of Asia-Pacific geography illuminates the reality that land-based aircraft face a region dominated by open ocean thousands of miles from the American mainland. The chapter also surveys US interests in the region. Foreign-trade data from the US Census Bureau and statistics from the World Trade Organization provide the basis for establishing US economic interests in the Asia-Pacific realm. In addition to economic interests, historical ties to the region and humanitarian concerns define another category of defense considerations. Many historical ties are manifest in contemporary security agreements. The security agreements and the underlying relationships between the United States and its allies in the Pacific help define the complex defense environment faced by Pacific strategists. The rise of China may be the most important contextual consideration of all. China’s economic growth during the past three decades has been remarkable. The significant increase in wealth has enabled Chinese leaders to fund



sophisticated military purchases that noticeably enhance China's power-projection capability. Smaller countries in the region consider Chinese military expansion destabilizing, but Chinese intentions are difficult to determine. Chapter 1 will investigate expert opinion about trends in Chinese economic, population, and military growth, and then establish a possible range of Chinese intentions to provide a starting point for analysis. The chapter then describes the most significant potential conflict areas in the Pacific. All four of the areas—Taiwan, the Korean Peninsula, the South China Sea, and the East China Sea—could result in direct conflict between the United States and China.

Chapter 2, "US Grand Strategy for the Asia-Pacific Region," explores different visions of grand strategy for the Pacific theater. Just as military leaders design combat actions to achieve political objectives, the peacetime posture of military forces must also support political goals. Because basing arrangements represent expensive long-term projects, posture planners seek to preserve flexibility for future strategists. International-relations experts have suggested a wide variety of strategic approaches for the United States in the Pacific, from complete retrenchment to deep engagement. Because complete acuity about future political strategies is unattainable, this chapter bounds the range of possible goals political leaders are likely to establish by examining solutions that spring from the two primary philosophies in international relations (IR) theory, realism and liberalism. The liberal point of view comes primarily from Joseph Nye and John Ikenberry. The works of Kenneth Waltz, Stephen Walt, Christopher Layne, and John Mearsheimer provide two different visions from the realist perspective. Ideally, the PACAF basing and capabilities plan would accommodate either IR perspective because planners can never be certain about the policy of future administrations. The chapter also includes a section regarding the security dilemma and its implications for the Asia-Pacific, specifically with respect to the United States and China. Chapter 2 closes by synthesizing the three different IR approaches and identifying the strengths and weaknesses of each.

Chapter 3, "Pacific Military Strategy and the Posture Analysis Construct," serves two roles. First, it describes the aspirations for American military involvement in the region. Second, it presents a construct for evaluating basing and capabilities options. The analytical framework ties together American goals and the evaluative criteria used to



assess posture alternatives. The construct incorporates considerations from three source types: strategic military guidance, academic analyses, and a theater-specific warfighting strategy original to this thesis. The military guidance comes from Department of Defense (DOD), PACOM, and Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) strategy documents. A RAND Corporation study called “The Posture Triangle” presents an academic perspective on US presence abroad. A second RAND study entitled “A Cost Analysis of the US Air Force Overseas Posture” provides financial data with which to evaluate the cost considerations. The chapter concludes with a detailed explanation of the Posture Analysis Construct (PAC). This construct provides a mathematical framework that gives structure and guidance to the art of strategy. The methodology is founded in DOD and PACOM guidance to ensure the recommended PACAF basing alternative complements the most important national goals and the combatant commander’s overall concept.

Chapter 4, “Force Posture Analysis,” analyzes five distinct basing alternatives and selects a recommended course of action. Alternative 1 is to maintain the *status quo*. All Air Force assets in the Pacific remain in their present locations and units continue to train and equip in accordance with existing plans. Alternative 2 adds an additional main operating base in Southeast Asia to the status quo posture. Both of the first two options rely exclusively on large main operating bases. The third and fourth alternatives close all Pacific main operating bases currently on foreign soil. Small austere bases replace the large, semi-permanent ones currently in operation. The only main operating bases that remain open are those on US territory. Alternative 3 also withdraws all USAF combat forces stationed in foreign countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Alternative 4 uses rotational forces at the austere bases to maintain US regional presence. Alternative 5, the hybrid solution, utilizes main operating bases in Northeast Asia and Guam while pursuing dispersed, austere bases in Southeast Asia. The five alternatives are scored using the Posture Analysis Construct presented in Chapter 3, and the top alternative is selected as the recommended course of action.

The planned rebalance to the Asia-Pacific has created considerable interest in the subject of basing in the USPACOM AOR. Although a few books and scholarly articles have emerged on America’s military posture in the Pacific, land-based airpower is rarely the central focus. This thesis hopes to contribute to the emerging literature by focusing

on that capability. Two limitations of the study deserve mention. First, it is based entirely on unclassified material. Classified data may contain greater fidelity about the Chinese military buildup and their intentions. More importantly, classified information about US weapons system capabilities against regional threats may or may not affect some of the conclusions reached in this work. The second limitation is the number of alternatives evaluated. Space considerations limit the analysis to only five options. The chosen options cover a relatively wide range of possibilities in the available space, but many more exist. This may be the first iteration in a series of analyses on the subject. The posture recommended by this study should at least form a starting point to develop variations to compare to one another in future iterations.

Readers with an affinity for Pacific issues or the development of theater-posture plans should be interested in this study, but any reader drawn to strategic studies will hopefully find the analysis worthwhile as well. The subject of Pacific basing should demand attention from a wide audience. In the early twenty-first century, it is as important as Mahan's considerations of naval bases in the Pacific were in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As William Henry Seward prophetically observed in 1852, the Pacific may well become the major theater for world events in the near-to-mid future. The United States must fight the impulse to focus solely on urgent matters in the Middle East, while neglecting important long-term considerations of the Pacific. If the United States does not act soon, it may face a situation similar to the one described in the introductory paragraphs.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Challenges to America's Enduring Interests in the Pacific**

The United States maintains a military presence in the Asia-Pacific region to promote stability and prosperity and safeguard American interests. US Air Force capabilities contribute to USPACOM's overall pursuit of these objectives. Any potential adjustment of the Air Force Pacific posture must take into account the strategic context and national interests in the region. This chapter provides the necessary context and describes American interests to provide a foundation upon which to build an analysis of basing and capabilities alternatives. The subjects addressed in this chapter include: (1) Asia-Pacific geography, (2) US interests in the Asia-Pacific, (3) the rise of China, (4) potential conflict areas, (5) existing US alliances, and (6) budget constraints. This six-part examination frames the complex challenge faced by USPACOM.

#### **Asia-Pacific Geography**

An air strategist's geographic considerations in the Asia-Pacific are an eclectic mix of three different but related factors: distance, water, and diversity.

Considerations of distance, both intra-theater and extra-theater, are central to US strategy in the Asia-Pacific. Intra-theater distance is important because the range from an installation to a potential conflict area will determine which power-projection capabilities are feasible and which are not. For example, fighter aircraft that provide air-to-air capabilities have considerably less range than bombers or air-refueling tankers. The four potential conflict areas addressed later in this chapter stretch across a 2,000-mile arc from North Korea to the South China Sea. No single base or geographically concentrated network of bases can provide the full complement of land-based airpower across the entire arc. Some dispersion is necessary to provide power projection to all the disputed areas.



**Figure 1. US Pacific Command Area of Responsibility.**

Source: Nautilus.org

Extra-theater distance primarily concerns logistical support. Taiwan, a potential conflict area in the Western Pacific, provides an illustration. Taiwan is only 81 miles from mainland China but 6,500 miles from San Francisco—eighty times farther! From San Francisco to Taiwan is also 3,000 miles farther than from New York to London. A major military buildup in the Pacific would require roughly double the shipping vessels or take twice as long compared to one across the Atlantic. Additionally, the long logistical tail would require protection to ensure forward bases are not isolated. Pacific installations must provide a web of defensive support for one another *and* for their extended logistical tails. These realities accentuate the importance of force posture in the Western Pacific.

Water, an obvious obstacle to land-based airpower, dominates the geography of the Asia-Pacific. The scarcity of land significantly limits basing options. An external power such as the United States might prefer to situate bases between potential conflict areas to maximize usefulness and minimize cost. But in the Pacific there often is no usable land conveniently located between disputed areas. Where there is land, it tends to be loaded with military infrastructure, making it a clear target for a potential adversary.

With its close proximity to Taiwan and the East China Sea, Okinawa is an example of such an area.

The presence of water also influences the types of missions flown. Missions such as air interdiction of maritime targets (AIMT), maritime air support (MAS), and antisubmarine warfare (ASW) are secondary in a land-based conflict but become high priorities where the sea domain is critical. The USAF has frequently deferred such missions to the Navy, but the context of the Pacific will require a different approach. Subsequent chapters will address this subject at greater length. At this point, the key is recognizing water covers most of the PACOM AOR. Water provides both geographic connections and barriers. As a connector, water provides valuable sea lines of communications (SLOCs) linking economic producers to their markets. As a barrier, water separates the American homeland from potential conflict areas in the theater and, in some cases, rival nations from one another.

Diversity manifests itself in multiple ways in the Pacific. Population diversity is perhaps the most dramatic. Residents of the 36 nations inside the USPACOM AOR speak over 3,000 languages.<sup>1</sup> As the abundance of language backgrounds suggests, cultural differences are remarkable. For the subject at hand, diverse cultural experiences lead to many different perspectives about the desirability of US basing on or near their territory. Diverse economic connections and conditions also affect local sentiment about American interaction. Many states have strong economic connections to both China and the United States. Economic conditions vary as well. Some states in the Asia-Pacific have sophisticated, highly technological economies, while others are almost primitive. Many have elements of both, leading to a population of wealthy urbanites and impoverished peasants.

Comparing the Asia-Pacific's economic diversity to Cold-War Europe highlights its significance. Cold-War Europe had a clear line of demarcation between the Eastern Block and the Western Block. The Soviet Union presented a clear threat to Western Europe. Thus the strategic interests of diverse European countries became aligned in opposition to the communist nations to the east. The absence of significant economic

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1. USPACOM, "USPACOM Area of Responsibility," <http://www.pacom.mil/AboutUSPACOM/USPACOMAreaofResponsibility.aspx> (accessed 29 January 2015).

interaction between the two blocks was both a manifestation and an enabler of this polarity. It also made a strategy of containment economically feasible. The Asia-Pacific region of the early 21st century is far less polarized, largely due to its economic interconnections. While the Soviet Union was economically isolated from the Western world, China is deeply involved with international trade. Even potential adversaries trade extensively with one another. For Cold War Europe, the choice of defense partnerships was fairly clear. The situation in the Asia-Pacific is very different.

In sum, the major characteristics of Pacific geography are distance, water, and diversity. Distance influences the installations' locations because bases must be within range of potentially contested areas, yet still maintain lines of communication that enable resupply from the homeland. Water dominates the theater, affecting everything from missions to basing. The economic and cultural diversity in the region create very different perspectives about US basing from one country to the next. Some are eager to embrace American presence, while others are at best lukewarm.

### **US Interests in the Asia-Pacific**

Military strategists must understand the interests they are protecting before they can develop a suitable plan to allocate resources. US interests in the Asia-Pacific region fit fairly neatly into three groups: (1) security interests, (2) economic interests, and (3) values-driven interests.<sup>2</sup> At times, one set of interests may cut against another. In some of those cases, a deeper analysis will resolve the apparent paradox.

#### **Security Interests**

The United States' most essential security interest in the Pacific is nuclear stability. No other threat approaches the destruction that could result from a nuclear attack. Three nations within the USPACOM AOR possess nuclear weapons: India, China, and North Korea.<sup>3</sup> India is unlikely to threaten the US with nuclear weapons. The

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2. The interests roughly align with the first three interests listed in the US National Security Strategy (NSS): security, prosperity, and values. The other interest in the NSS, a rules-based international order, is merely a way to accomplish the other three. United States, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: White House, February 2015), 2.

3. "The Nuclear Weapons States - Who Has Them And How Many," *Forbes*, , <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jamesconca/2014/09/25/the-nuclear-weapons-states-who-has-them-and-how-many/> (accessed 27 January, 2015). Pakistan is within the geographic boundaries of CENTCOM so is not included in three countries listed above.



Indian nuclear arsenal exists to deter Pakistan and China. The US and India are increasing security cooperation, and no significant disputes exist between the two.

North Korea and China are different. Any potential conflict with these nations carries the risk that it could escalate to a nuclear exchange. North Korea's current nuclear capability is a clear threat to South Korea and Japan. It probably has the capability to strike Hawaii and Alaska as well. The North also claims its missiles can reach the west coast of the United States but this boast is less substantiated. Even if its claims are exaggerated, North Korea's status as a nuclear power requires respect.<sup>4</sup> China is a much more capable nuclear power. It has mobile intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) that can reach any target in the world and submarines capable of striking the continental US with missiles fired from the mid-Pacific. The Chinese arsenal, estimated at 300 weapons, is much smaller than the American one; however, the threat is still considerable.<sup>5</sup> China's nuclear capabilities are modern and sufficiently numerous to provide a credible deterrent.

The next most important Pacific interest is the protection of US territory. Hawaii, as a US state, should receive the highest priority followed closely by Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa.<sup>6</sup> The US also has other small possessions in the Pacific such as Wake Island and Johnston Atoll. An invasion of Hawaii or one of the other Pacific territories is unlikely to occur in the foreseeable future; however, cyber attacks against military or civilian facilities are a real possibility should hostilities occur elsewhere in the region with China or North Korea. Chinese submarines could also present a potential threat to interdict shipping around US territory or to launch conventional attacks against the islands.

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4. Jane's Defence and Security, *Strategic Weapons Systems - North Korea*, Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment - China and Northeast Asia, 7 January 2015.

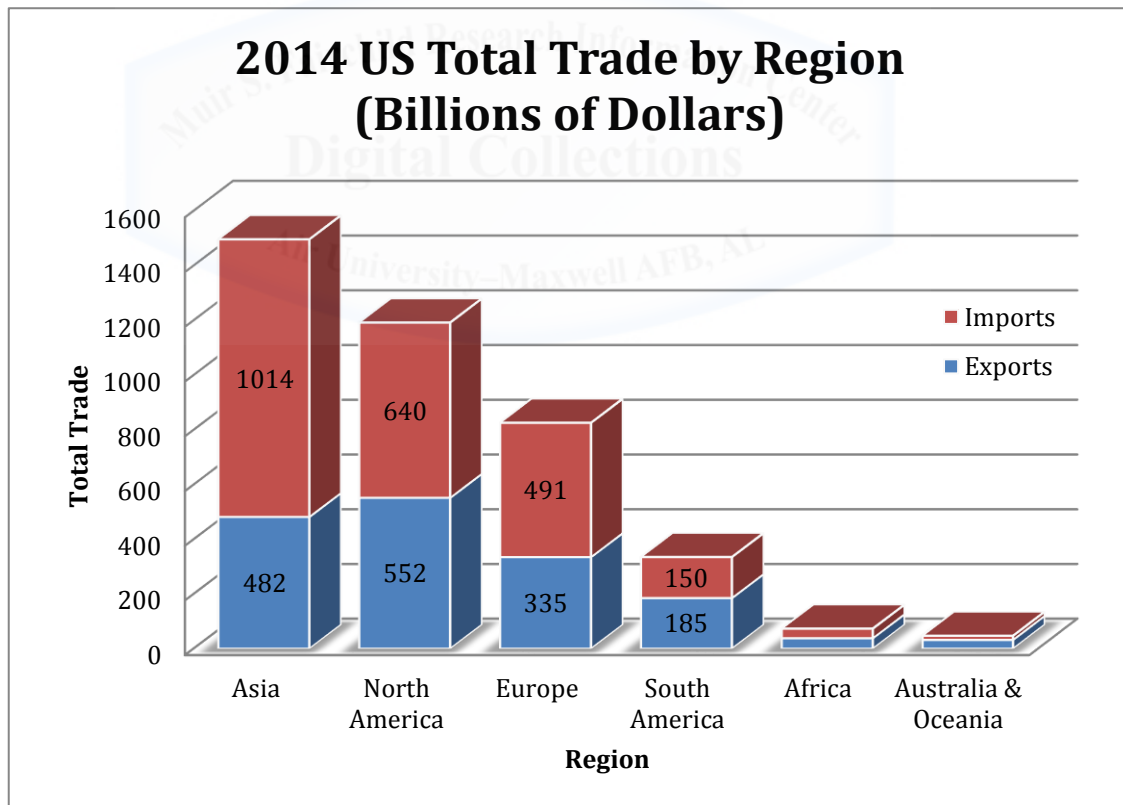
5. Jane's Defence and Security, *Strategic Weapons Systems - China*, Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment-China and Northeast Asia, 30 November 2014.

6. USPACOM, "USPACOM History," <http://www.pacom.mil/AboutUSPACOM/History.aspx> (accessed 28 January 2015). Forces in Alaska are assigned to USPACOM but Alaska is part of the USNORTHCOM AOR. Clearly, PACOM forces could play a role in defending Alaska but that subject is beyond the scope of this thesis.

## Economic Interests

J.F.C. Fuller suggested soldiers should understand the “true meaning of the economic object.”<sup>7</sup> Although Fuller was referring to wartime campaign planning, his advice is just as relevant to peacetime force posture decisions. An American strategist working in the PACOM AOR should be able to answer three questions. How much does the US trade with the region? With whom does the US trade? Could economic ties with potential adversaries be so deep as to prevent conflict?

Answering the first question reveals the importance of the Asia-Pacific region. The trade relationship between the US and Asia is simply colossal. As shown in figure 2, the United States trades more with Asia than any other region. Not only does trade with Asia exceed trade with other North American nations, annual trade between the US and Asia exceed trade with other North American nations, annual trade between the US and Asia is nearly double that which takes place between the US and Europe. The extent of economic ties clearly indicates the Asia-Pacific is a vital region for the United States.



**Figure 2. US Total Trade by Region.**

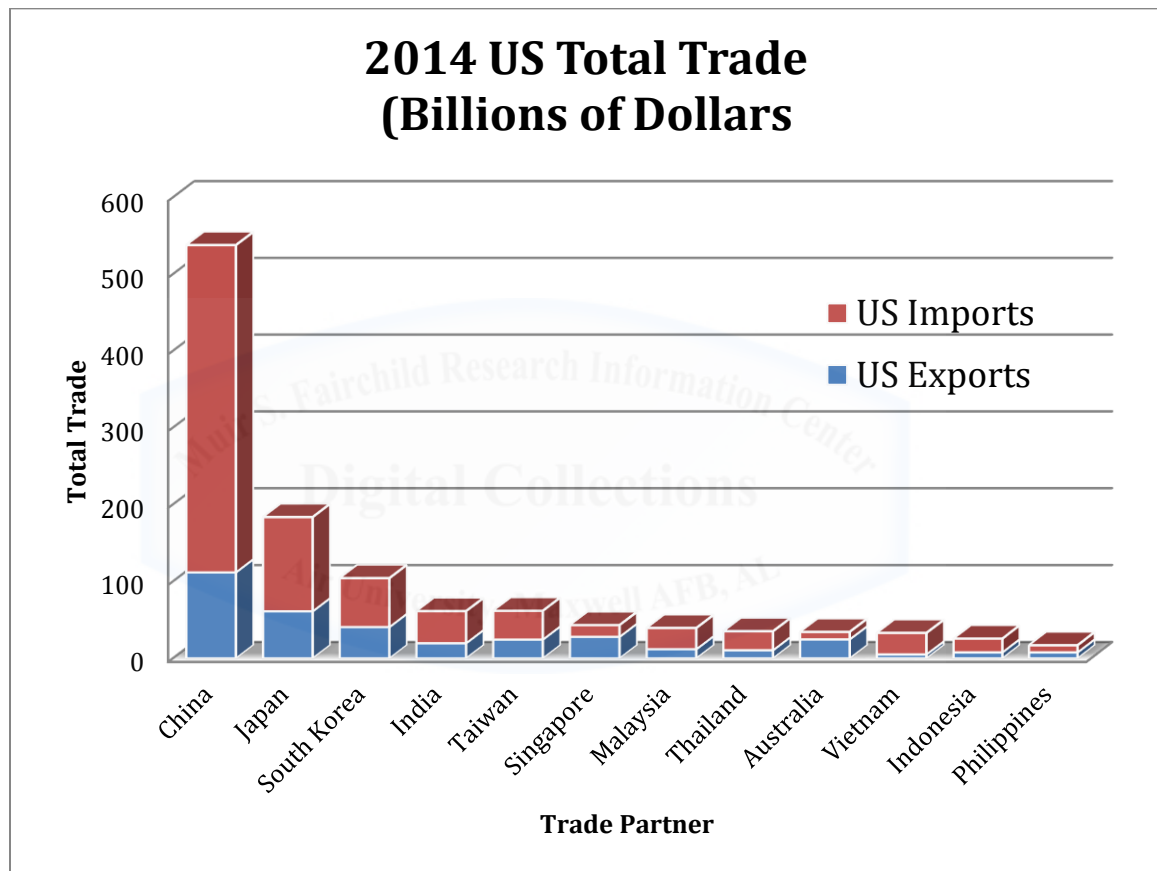
Source: Author constructed chart with data from US Census Bureau.

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7. J. F. C. Fuller and Combat Studies Institute Press, *The Foundations of the Science of War* (London, UK: Books Express Publishing, 2012), 74.



Simply knowing the theater is important is not enough on its own. The American strategist should know the extent of economic ties between his own country and the others in the region. Figure 3 clearly shows China is the United States' largest trading partner in the Asia-Pacific. Although imports account for a significant portion of trade with China, US-owned businesses often profit by using manufacturing facilities in China to reduce labor costs. From this chart alone, it seems China and the US would eagerly avoid conflict with one another. But there is more to the economic picture.

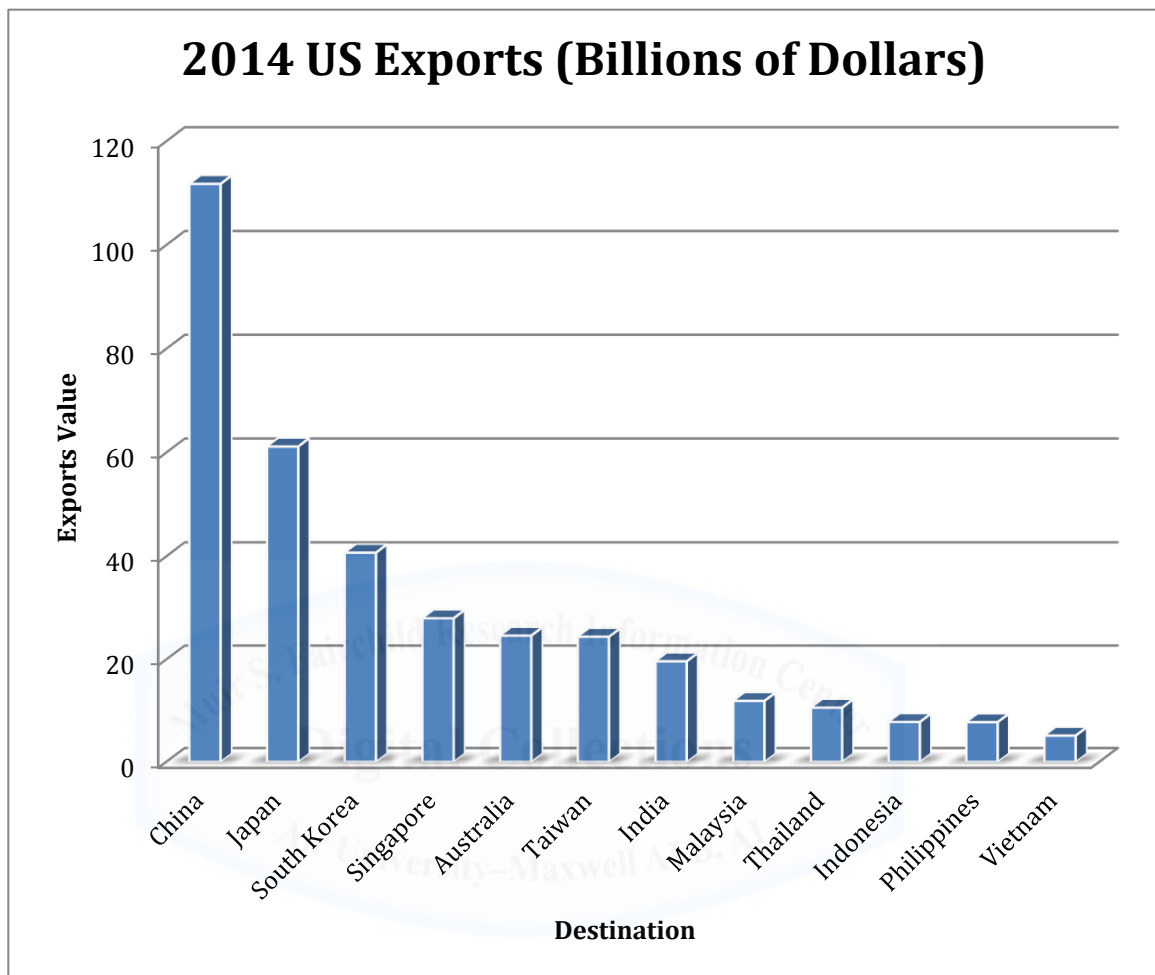


**Figure 3. US Total Trade in the Asia-Pacific Region.**

Source: Author constructed chart with data from US Census Bureau.

US exports are a better indicator of US economic interests than total trade because American products sold in foreign markets bring profits to US companies and support jobs at home. The data shown in figure 4 includes only US exports. Japan, South Korea and others close the gap with China in this depiction. Yet, China is still the largest buyer of American goods. It seems improbable that two major trading partners like the US and

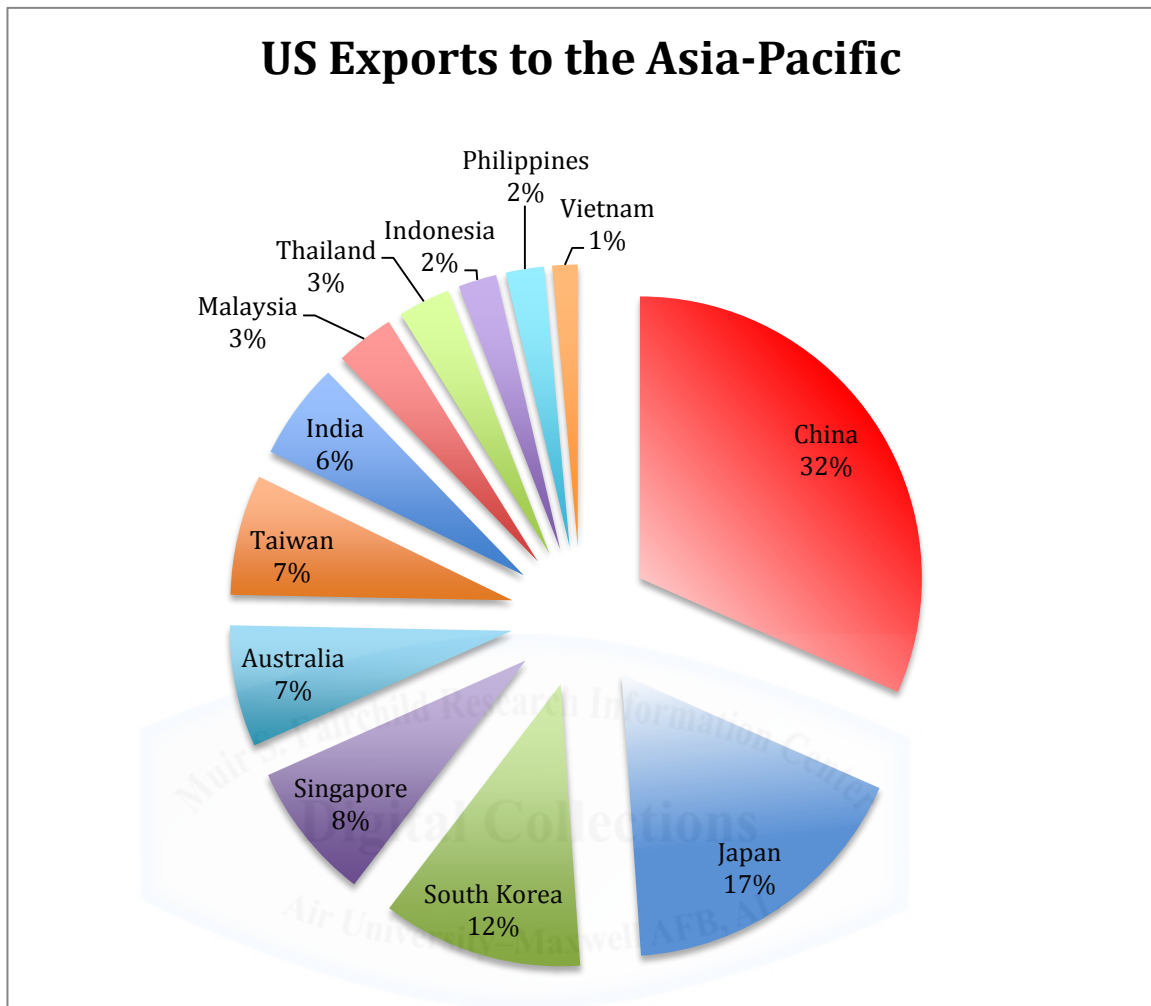
China could become adversaries. There is, however, still more economic data to consider.



**Figure 4. US Exports to the Asia-Pacific Region.**

Source: Author constructed chart with data from US Census Bureau.

A third chart illustrates why pursuing security or values related interests in support of smaller trading partners may actually align with US economic interests. Figure 5 depicts the US export trade in the Asia-Pacific in a different manner. Even though China is the largest trading partner, the sum of the smaller partners exceeds that of China. If Chinese actions threaten stability or the rules-based trading system in Pacific, those actions could warrant an American response despite the extent of US economic ties with China.



**Figure 5. US Exports to the Asia-Pacific.**

Source: Author constructed chart with data from US Census Bureau.

### Values-Driven Interests

The values-driven interests category covers a wide range of potential concerns. The most common types of military activities arising from values-driven interests are humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR). Values-driven interests also include support for “universal values” as defined by the 2015 US National Security Strategy (NSS). Those values include freedom of speech, assembly, and religion plus basic equality, dignity, and the fair administration of justice.<sup>8</sup>

Operation Unified Assistance was the US response to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami that killed over 200,000 people. The affected location was far from any

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8. United States, *National Security Strategy*, 20.

established American bases but the US Air Force was able to provide rescue assistance and deliver over 24,000,000 pounds of cargo to help those in need.<sup>9</sup> Of the 49 US aircraft that flew missions in support of this effort, only two KC-135s from Kadena AB, Okinawa did so from their home stations. The rest operated from bases in Diego Garcia, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and Sri Lanka.<sup>10</sup> The tsunami example shows that HADR missions could benefit from an additional base in Southeast Asia so the relief task force doesn't have to scramble to find operating locations. Prepositioned supplies and a runway able to handle C-5 operations with even more material could save lives when time is critical.

At present, there is little indication that the United States will intervene militarily to protect the human rights of foreign citizens. North Korea is clearly the most egregious violator of human rights in the region, but there has been no significant push to intervene there due to broader geopolitical considerations.<sup>11</sup> The Chinese human rights record is also subpar, but US military conflict with China solely over human rights issues is unlikely. East Timor provides the clearest indicator that military intervention on behalf foreign of citizens is unlikely. In that well-documented crisis, the United States avoided involvement and deferred to the United Nations (UN). Economic and political pressures remain the preferred American method to address human-rights issues in the Asia-Pacific.

Recent history in the Pacific Theater indicates American combat intervention is unlikely to occur solely in support of universal values threatened by political oppression. In contrast, humanitarian responses for natural disasters are likely to continue. Although other nations will work to accommodate USAF requests during HADR missions, PACAF values-driven operations in Southeast Asia could potentially benefit from having prepositioned relief supplies at a local airfield with a sizeable runway.

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9 PACAF Office of History, *With Compassion and Hope: The Story of Operation Unified Assistance The Air Force Support for Tsunami Relief Operations in Southeast Asia 25 December 2004 - 15 February 2005* (Hickam AFB, HI: Pacific Air Forces, January 2006), <http://www.afhra.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-100129-095.pdf>, iii.

10. PACAF Office of History, *With Compassion and Hope*, Appendix F.

11. Human Rights Council, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea* (New York, NY: UN, 7 February 2014).

In sum, American interests in the Asia-Pacific fall into three groups: security interests, economic interests, and values driven interests. America's most significant security interests in the region are nuclear stability and protecting the portions of the homeland that lie within the AOR. Economic interests are extensive. The US trades more with Asia than any other region on the planet. Economic considerations are certainly important to force posture. Trade relationships are likely to influence the extent of US presence. Lastly, humanitarian aid missions are salient to American values, so posture decisions should consider their requirements as well.

### **The Rise of China**

The rise of China is the most significant contemporary strategic development in Asia. China's population of 1.35 billion is the world's largest.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the exponential growth of China's economy over the last three decades has catapulted the nation's status, wealth, and military capability to the forefront of Asian affairs. This growth has created a huge demand for resources. China must now look outside its borders to acquire the materials needed to maintain its economic trajectory. Many inside China also feel that international prestige and influence should be growing faster to keep up with China's massive economy and population. China's President Xi Jinping inspires his country using the phrase "Chinese Dream" to call for a "great revival of the Chinese nation."<sup>13</sup> The specifics of President Xi's dream are elusive. Perhaps the catchphrase is even "calculated in its opacity."<sup>14</sup> Some outside experts believe rapid Chinese growth could lead to conflict. Others believe China will become a responsible power. To understand China's rise, four areas require examination: China's economic growth, its resource demand, its military expansion, and its external intentions.

### **Economic Growth**

Deng Xiaoping initiated China's move toward market economy in 1979. At that time, China's trade with the world was less than \$10 billion. Thirty years later it had

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12. US Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Factbook," <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>.

13. "Chasing the Chinese Dream; Xi Jinping's Vision," *The Economist*, 4 May 2013.

14. "Chasing the Chinese Dream; Xi Jinping's Vision."

increased a hundredfold.<sup>15</sup> Between 1980 and 2010, China's economy grew 13.1 percent annually.<sup>16</sup> During the same period, the US economy did not have a single year where it grew at a 10 percent rate and only registered one year with growth over 5 percent.<sup>17</sup> In 1981, 84 percent of the Chinese population was living below the poverty level. By 2013, the number had dropped to 13 percent.<sup>18</sup> China is now the largest exporter in the world and the world's top producer of industrial and agricultural products.<sup>19</sup> Although the Chinese population still has a standard of living well below that of the West, its prosperity is advancing rapidly.

According to the World Trade Organization's most recent data, China's gross domestic product (GDP) for 2013 totaled \$9.2 trillion and ranked second in the world. Japan, the closest regional competitor and the world's number three economy, trails significantly with a GDP of only \$4.9 trillion. The United States' GDP of \$16.8 billion still ranks number one, but China is rapidly closing the gap.<sup>20</sup>

One effect of economic growth is urbanization. Peasants move to cities in search of higher-paying jobs and greater access to modern conveniences. As of 2010, there were forty Chinese cities with one million or more inhabitants. By 2020, the Chinese government hopes to increase that number by an additional 225 cities.<sup>21</sup> Such accelerated urbanization creates a huge demand for the raw materials used in construction. Large quantities of iron ore, the major component of steel, and other raw materials become necessities.

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15. Christian Caryl, *Strange Rebels: 1979 and the Birth of the 21st Century*, Reprint edition (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 336.

16. Robert Haddick, *Fire on the Water: China, America, and the Future of the Pacific* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2014), 9.

17. The World Bank, "World Databank: World Development Indicators," <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/>.

18. The World Bank, "World Bank: China Overview," <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/china/overview#3> (accessed 29 January 2015).

19. US Central Intelligence Agency, "CIA World Factbook."

20. World Trade Organization, "WTO Statistics," *WTO Statistics*, [http://www.wto.org/english/res\\_e/statis\\_e/statis\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/res_e/statis_e/statis_e.htm). GDP can be adjusted for Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) to account for cost variations in different parts of the world. When PPP is applied, the total US GDP and the total Chinese GDP are roughly equal.

21. Dambisa Moyo, *Winner Take All: China's Race for Resources and What It Means for the World* (New York: Basic Books, 2012), 25.

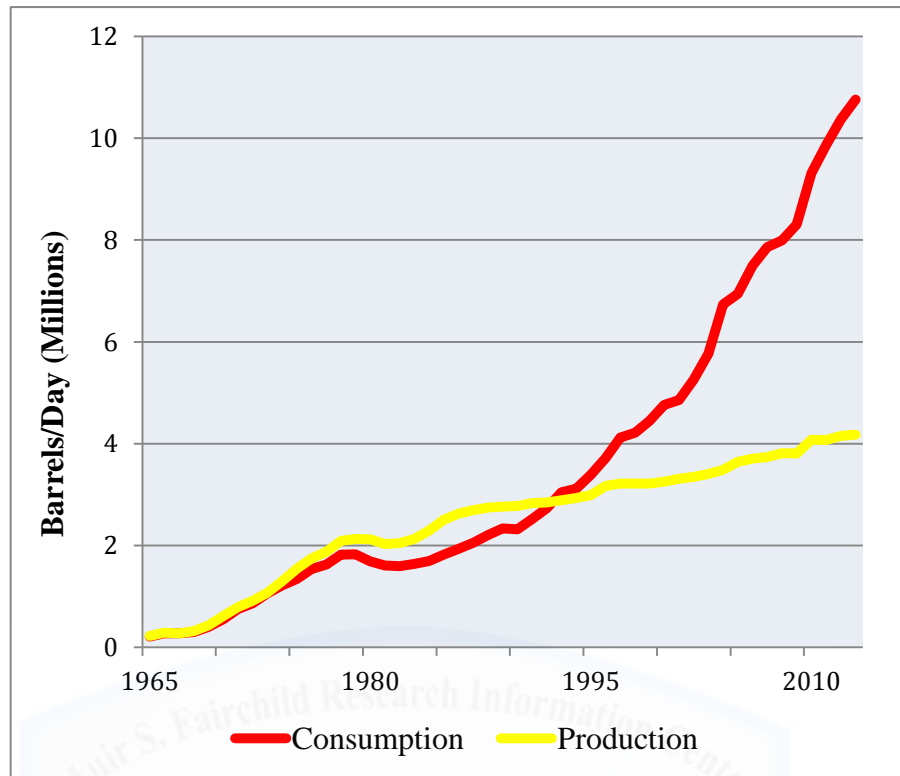
## Resource Demand

Rapid growth alone is not troubling. In one sense, it represents an opportunity for businesses in other countries to gain a new market for their goods in China. However, the convergence of several growth-related trends does create cause for concern. Every aspect of China's growth creates a large and steadily increasing appetite for resources. China's wealth is dependent upon manufacturers turning raw materials into finished products and then exporting them for profits. This large-scale Chinese industrial output requires an equally large-scale input of raw materials. The transformation of much of China's enormous and destitute peasant population into the middle class creates additional demand for resources because the new middle class wants to buy more manufactured goods. Furthermore, rapid urbanization necessitates resources for construction projects. The Chinese demand for resources is dizzying.

The Chinese do not have the resources they require. In a 2003 White Paper, the Chinese government claimed "China will depend mainly on the exploitation of its own mineral resources to guarantee the needs of its modernization program." However, Beijing admitted, "There is a fairly large gap between the supply and demand in oil, high-grade iron, high-grade copper, fine quality bauxite . . . We shall open still wider to the outside world."<sup>22</sup> A review of two of these resources provides insight regarding the broader Chinese resource situation. Crude oil, a valuable commodity globally, is examined because it may have a direct impact on the security situation in East Asia. Iron ore is examined for its own direct impact and because it provides a representation of other resources China needs but does not have overland access to in sufficient quantities.

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22. Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, *China's Policy on Mineral Resources*, White Paper (Beijing, China: December 23, 2003).



**Figure 6. Chinese Crude Oil Production and Consumption.**

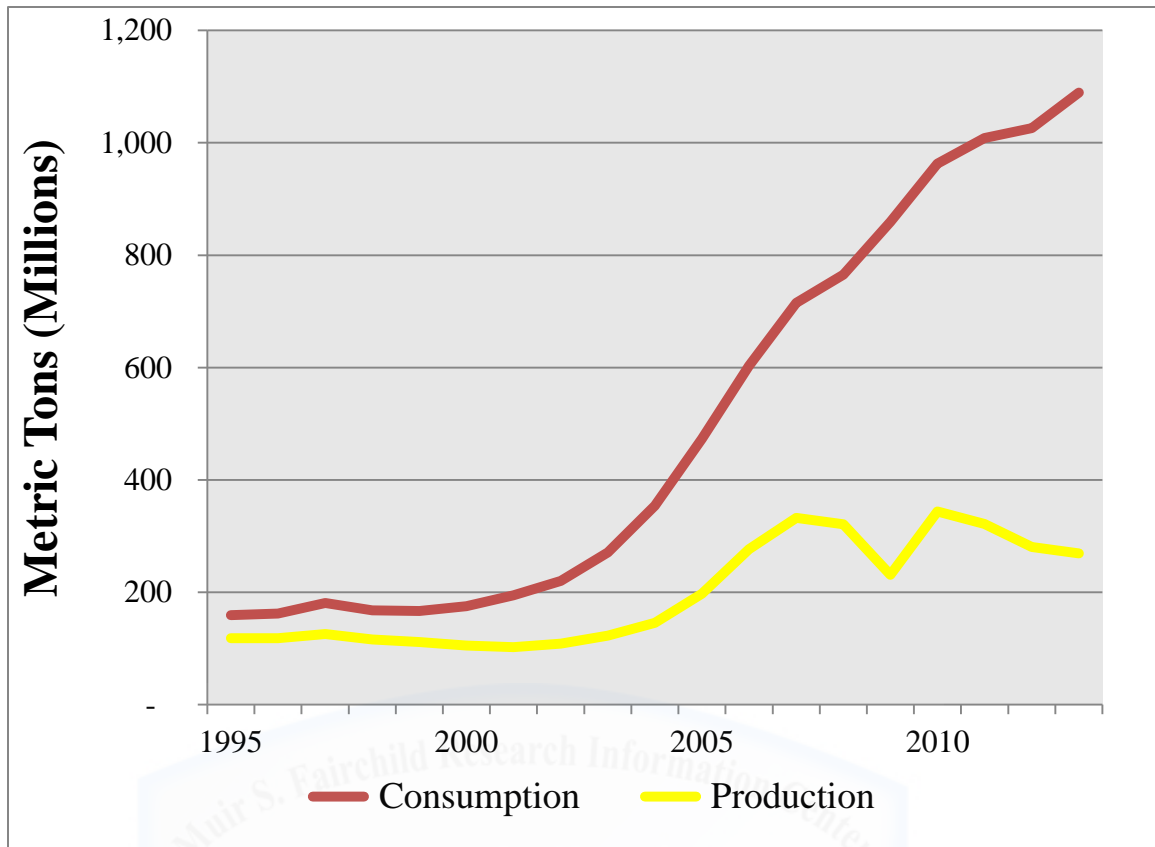
Source: Author constructed chart with data from *BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2014*. <http://www.bp.com/en/global/corporate/about-bp/energy-economics/statistical-review-of-world-energy/energy-charting-tool.html>

Figure 6 shows a large gap between China's production and consumption of crude oil. In 2013, China produced 4.2 million barrels per day of crude oil but consumed 10.8 million.<sup>23</sup> An expanding Chinese middle class will probably create even greater demand for oil. The Middle East is the primary supplier of oil to China.<sup>24</sup> The sources of China's oil are important because energy security is a major consideration for Chinese defense decisions. Most of China's oil imports have to pass through the Strait of Malacca and close to several nations with which China has territorial disputes.

23. British Petroleum, *BP Statistical Review of World Energy: Oil Section*, <http://www.bp.com/content/dam/bp/pdf/Energy-economics/statistical-review-2014/BP-statistical-review-of-world-energy-2014-oil-section.pdf>.

24. US Energy Information Administration, "China Energy Overview," <http://www.eia.gov/countries/cab.cfm?fips=ch> (accessed January 30, 2015).



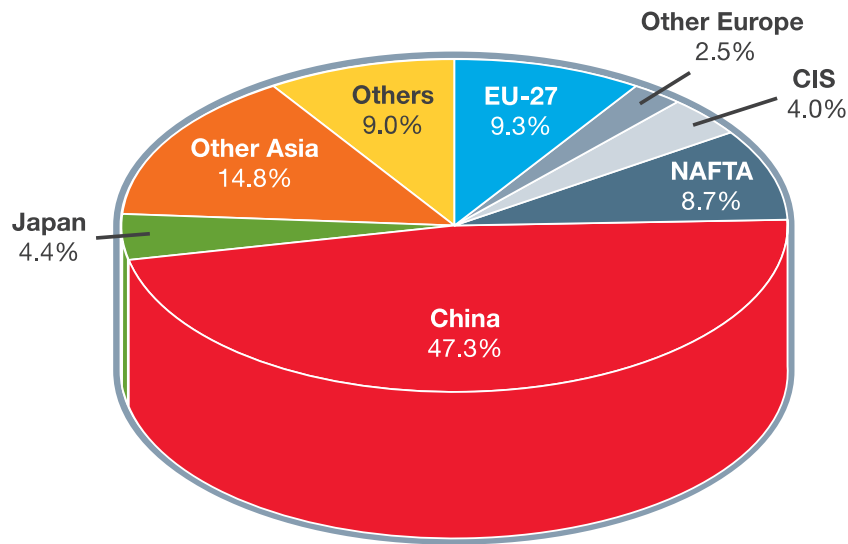


**Figure 7. Chinese Iron Ore Production and Consumption.**

Source: Author constructed chart with data from World Steel Association's Steel Statistical Yearbooks. <http://www.worldsteel.org/statistics/statistics-archive/yearbook-archive.html>

The Chinese iron ore situation is even more dramatic than the petroleum situation. In 2012, China produced 280 million tons of iron ore while it imported nearly three times as much—748 million tons. Based on 2013 trade data, over half of China's iron ore comes from Australia, while another quarter comes from South America.<sup>25</sup> Iron ore is critical to China because it is the main component of steel, and China uses a tremendous amount of steel. The World Steel Association indicates that China annually uses almost half of the steel produced worldwide. Figure 8 depicts global steel use.

25. World Steel Association, *World Steel in Figures*, <http://www.worldsteel.org/dms/internetDocumentList/bookshop/World-Steel-in-Figures-2014/document/World%20Steel%20in%20Figures%202014%20Final.pdf>. The high demand for iron ore in China and its relative scarcity there drives the Chinese mining industry to mine ore with a ferrous content significantly lower than the world average. The World Steel Association adjusts China's iron ore production numbers to account for this practice. This study utilizes the adjusted numbers.



Others comprise:

Africa	2.0%	Central and South America	3.3%
Middle East	3.2%	Australia and New Zealand	0.4%

**Figure 8. World Steel Use, 2013.**

Source: World Steel Association <http://www.worldsteel.org/dms/internetDocumentList/bookshop/World-Steel-in-Figures-2014/document/World%20Steel%20in%20Figures%202014%20Final.pdf>

The data regarding iron ore and oil are important for two reasons. First, it shows why China's continued growth is contingent on external resources. Second, China's resource dependency is an Achilles heel the US might be able to exploit to deescalate a tense situation. Cutting off or sharply reducing imports of these and other resources could have a dramatic effect on China's economy.

### **Military Expansion**

China is well aware of its resource vulnerabilities. The desire to protect import flows is just one of the reasons for Chinese military expansion. Analysts frequently indicate that two events from the 1990s also triggered China's effort to strengthen its military force. The first was the 1991 Persian Gulf War. The American military force was able to deliver a stunning defeat of Iraq using "airpower, precision-guided munitions,

and a modern intelligence and command infrastructure.”<sup>26</sup> The second event was the Taiwan Strait crises of 1995-1996. China tried to influence Taiwan’s election by test-firing missiles into the waters near the island. The US responded by sending two carrier strike groups to the area. The Chinese had no answer to this show of force.<sup>27</sup> The PRC resolved to strengthen its capabilities with a large-scale expansion and modernization of its military forces.

The most significant expansion of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is the missile program. The PLA’s Second Artillery Corps (SAC) now has roughly 1100 DF-11 and DF-15 short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) that can reach targets inside what China refers to as the First Island Chain (see figure 9). The SAC aims most of these SRBMs at Taiwan, but US bases in Okinawa and South Korea are also within range of the weapons. The DF-15 incorporates a maneuverable second stage and a stealthy shape to make it difficult for American anti-missile systems to intercept.<sup>28</sup> China’s current medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBM) are all equipped with nuclear weapons, but some estimates anticipate that the Chinese may have a conventional MRBM with a range of 4000 kilometers (roughly 2500 miles) by 2016. These weapons could potentially strike Guam.<sup>29</sup> The US Navy also faces a significant missile threat from the Second Artillery Corps. The DF-21D is an anti-ship ballistic missile that has a range of 1500 nautical miles. When integrated with land-, sea-, and space-based sensors it can target naval vessels including aircraft carriers. If effective, it has the potential to push US carrier battle groups out of range of regional hot spots.<sup>30</sup>

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26. Robert Haddick, *Fire on the Water*, 82.

27. Robert Haddick, *Fire on the Water*, 82.

28. Jane’s Defence and Security, *Strategic Weapons Systems - China*.

29. Jane’s Defence and Security, *Strategic Weapons Systems - China*.

30. Jane’s Defence and Security, *Strategic Weapons Systems - China*.



**Figure 9. First and Second Island Chains.**

Source: GlobalSecurity.org

The People's Liberation Army-Navy (PLAN) and the People's Liberation Army-Air Force (PLAAF) have pursued modernization and expansion. In many ways, their capabilities seemed to be modeled after the US Navy and the US Air Force.

In the 1980s, the PLAN was merely a coastal-defense force, but it is steadily becoming a power projection service. The PLAN currently has 1 aircraft carrier, 5 strategic missile submarines, 57 attack submarines, 25 destroyers, 46 frigates, and 135 fast attack craft. These numbers signify the PLAN has more major combatant ships than any other regional competitor does. The strategic missile submarines and attack submarines present the most significant challenges to the United States. Notably absent from this list is a sufficient number of amphibious ships to carry out an invasion of Taiwan. Nonetheless, the PLAN is capable of effectively blockading Taiwan unless the

US intervenes.<sup>31</sup> The DOD projects that China “will probably build “multiple aircraft carriers over the next 15 years.”<sup>32</sup> As the PLAN fields additional aircraft carriers, the importance of USAF maritime airpower capabilities will continue to grow.

The DOD also reports China’s ability to operate a “blue water” navy is “small but growing.”<sup>33</sup> In recent years the PLAN has engaged in anti-piracy activity to protect Chinese merchant vessels from Somali pirates. The effort currently operates three ships in the Gulf of Aden. Counter-piracy missions have been the PLAN’s primary activity in distant seas, but the force regularly sails outside the First Island Chain and has even gone as far as South America. China is actively seeking logistical support so that it can expand naval operations in the Indian Ocean.<sup>34</sup> The PLAN’s capabilities are steadily improving.

An assessment of the PLAAF from the American perspective boils down to three realities. First, the PLAAF has a sufficiently large force to present a numerical challenge to any potential adversary, including the United States. Second, the PLAAF is closing the technology gap that separates it from the US. Third, the PLAAF has home-field advantage over the USAF should a conflict arise from any of the disputed areas in the region.

The size of the PLAAF is considerable. The US Department of Defense estimates that the PLAAF has 2,800 aircraft, 1,900 of which have combat roles. Although the DOD estimates only 600 of those combat aircraft are “modern”, other “Asian government sources” cited by Jane’s Defence suggest the number of modern aircraft is over 900. These same sources predict the Chinese will have over 1,500 modern combat aircraft by 2020.<sup>35</sup> In terms of total airframes in service, the USAF and USN may continue to possess a numerical advantage for some years to come, but even achieving parity within

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31. Jane’s Defence and Security, *Chinese Air Force Assessment*, Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment - China and Northeast Asia, 6 January 2015.

32. Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China*, (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2014), 38.

33. Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China*, 37.

34. Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China*, 37-38.

35. Jane’s Defence and Security, *Chinese Air Force Assessment*.

the theater seems unlikely due to competing demands for American homeland defense and US commitments to other regions.

The DOD provides an annual report to Congress on military and security developments involving the PRC. The 2014 report asserted, “The PLAAF is pursuing modernization on a scale unprecedented in its history and is rapidly closing the gap with Western air forces across a broad spectrum of capabilities including aircraft, command and control (C2), jammers, electronic warfare (EW), and data links.” One of the highlights of PLAAF modernization is the development of two fifth-generation fighter aircraft, the J-20 and the J-31. These aircraft are comparable to the F-22 and F-35 respectively. The PLAAF also operates one of the largest forces of advanced surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems in the world. Its SAM force includes SA-20s, CSA-9s, and may soon include S-400s imported from Russia. These systems pose significant threats to non-stealthy platforms, which would include all US fourth-generation fighters, in addition to the B-1 and B-52 bombers.<sup>36</sup>



**Figure 10. China's Major Air Force and Naval Units.**

Source: Modified from *The Economist*, “The Long March to be a Superpower.” <http://www.economist.com/node/9581310>

36. Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China*.



Neither the number of Chinese platforms nor the narrowing of the technology gap is as large a hurdle for the US as the home-field advantage enjoyed by the PLAAF. In the event of a conflict between the US and China the PLAAF can operate from a large number of airfields within reach of the conflict area yet still inside its homeland. Jane's Defence catalogues over 100 air bases within China.<sup>37</sup> The US has only six in the western Pacific. Perhaps more importantly, Chinese bases are closer than the American bases to the contested areas in the South China Sea and Taiwan. The PLAAF has 27 air bases within 500 miles of the Taiwan Strait and the USAF has just one, Kadena.<sup>38</sup> The distance factor, however, is relatively neutral when it comes to the Korean Peninsula and the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea.

### **China's External Intentions**

In 1900, Alfred Thayer Mahan observed, "It is difficult to contemplate with equanimity such a vast mass as the four hundred millions of China concentrated into one effective political organization, equipped with modern appliances, and cooped within a territory already narrow for it."<sup>39</sup> Mahan foreshadowed what is now coming true. Except, instead of 400 million there are now 1.35 billion Chinese citizens cooped in roughly the same territory.<sup>40</sup> As China's military might increases, its neighbors naturally question its intentions, especially in light of the resource deficiencies previously noted.

Assessments about the intentions of Chinese leaders can be split into two groups based on which factor they emphasize most. On one side, analysts focus on *interdependence*. They believe China's international economic ties will lead it to peacefully ascend to a position of responsible leadership on the world stage. This position projects China will increasingly honor the rule of law and even liberalize its internal political structure along the way. Analysts favoring interdependence encourage engagement with China. The other side emphasizes *power*. They believe that China's expanding military threatens the present world order. Even if Chinese leaders today do

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37. Jane's Defence and Security, *Chinese Air Force Assessment*.

38. If you include all US air bases inside the 500 mile ring, the number only increases to two. The additional base is the US Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, which is also on Okinawa.

39. Peter Paret, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1986), 466.

40. US Central Intelligence Agency, "CIA World Factbook."

not have revisionist intentions, such intentions will naturally arise as China's capability increases. For those concerned with power, containing Chinese growth is the priority.<sup>41</sup> Not every expert falls neatly into one of the two groups, but the analysis still benefits from this approach.

The interdependence group insists Chinese aspirations are similar to American ones. Chinese Premier Xi Jinping optimistically endorses the pursuit of a nonthreatening Chinese dream. "To meet [our people's] desire for a happy life is our mission."<sup>42</sup> In this view, expansion of China's military capabilities is consistent with its rise in economic status. The PRC needs a navy capable of projecting power to protect its sea lines of communication. To them, Chinese maritime claims may be questionable; but so are the claims of the Philippines, Japan, and Taiwan. Furthermore, they assert the United States behaves more aggressively than China. Examples include bombing the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, opposing Beijing's bid for the 2000 Olympics, blocking Chinese membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO) for five years, providing military support for Taiwan, and continued surveillance flights along the Chinese coast. American behavior has led to tensions such as those that arose from the 2001 collision of a Chinese jet fighter and an American spy plane.<sup>43</sup> Since the US is China's largest trading partner, the interdependence group believes the US should not feel threatened by China's rise.

Analysts who focus on power see things from the opposite perspective. They forecast an increase in Chinese ambition. Denny Roy asserts China could become "bolder, more demanding, and less inclined to cooperate with the other major powers in the region."<sup>44</sup> This perspective believes President Xi is using the rhetoric of the Chinese dream to build nationalism and solidify support for the Chinese Communist Party. They believe the work of Chinese Colonel Liu Minfu reveals the true Chinese position. His 2010 book, *China Dream: Great Power Thinking and Strategic Posture in the Post-*

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41. Jeffrey Legro, "What China Will Want: The Future Intentions of a Rising Power," *Perspectives on Politics* 5, no. 3 (September 2007): 515.

42. "Xi Jinping and the Chinese Dream," *The Economist*, 4 May 2013.

43. Jing Li, *China's America: The Chinese View the United States, 1900-2000* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2012), 197-203.

44. Denny Roy, "Hegemon on the Horizon? China's Threat to East Asian Security," *International Security* 19, no. 1 (Summer 1994): 160.



*American Era*, suggests China should be assertive in its pursuit of global power.<sup>45</sup> The power group claims China intends to push the United States out of the Asia-Pacific region and align its neighbors to a Chinese-led system. This perspective asserts conflict between China and the United States is probable so long as US forces remain in the region. The only question is which hot spot will lead to the conflict.

American attempts to assess Chinese intentions and predict their actions are usually inaccurate, but seldom futile. Inaccuracies mainly occur because the Chinese government is not transparent. Official messages signal China wants to be a responsible leader in the international community, yet actions such as military expansion and seizure of disputed territories indicate otherwise. Assessments based on power or interdependence can be simplistic. However, even though they may be inaccurate, these assessments are not futile because they provide valuable insight about the considerations of Chinese leaders.

The position taken by this study is that Chinese leaders have long-term aspirations of increased prosperity and influence, both regional and global, but they have not yet determined how aggressive they will be in pursuing these goals. While this position may sound like fence straddling, it is not. It is an acknowledgement that future events are not predetermined. Strategies involve interplay between the involved players. There is no certainty about future actions of other parties. One can, however, hope to identify Chinese aspirations and pursue a course of action that guides their response in desirable directions.

### **Potential Conflict Areas**

Four specific geographic zones in the PACOM AOR deserve attention: Taiwan, the Korean Peninsula, the South China Sea, and the East China Sea. The core dispute in each of these potential conflict areas is either a battle for resources or an unresolved issue from a war fought decades ago. In some cases, it is both. Knowledge of these potential conflict areas is vital to understanding the region's security environment and is a prerequisite for informed basing decisions. This section presents a brief history of each dispute and provides information about the USAF presence nearby. Thucydides' timeless

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45. "Chasing the Chinese Dream; Xi Jinping's Vision," *The Economist*, 4 May 2013.

trio of fear, honor, and interest is used to facilitate an understanding of the motivators driving the parties involved in each dispute.<sup>46</sup>

## **Taiwan**

The political and security situation surrounding the island of Taiwan is exceptionally complex. The relevant political history begins in 1895 when China's Qing Dynasty ceded the island to Japan after a military defeat. After WWII, the Chinese Nationalist government regained control of the island. When the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) took over Mainland China in 1949, two million Nationalists fled to Taiwan and governed the island under the constitution originally written for all of China.<sup>47</sup> The Nationalist government referred to itself as the Republic of China (ROC) and claimed that it was still the rightful government of all China. The communist government on the mainland, meanwhile, claimed Taiwan to be under its jurisdiction. The United States, eager to contain communism, naturally sided with the ROC, but that relationship never took priority over maneuvering against America's putative nemesis, the Soviet Union. In the early 1970s, the Nixon Administration recognized a rift between Beijing and Moscow. In an effort to balance against the Soviet Union and Vietnam, Nixon opened up relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC) using a "one-China" policy that diminished Taiwan's international standing. The administration even allowed the PRC to take over the ROC's seat on the UN Security Council.<sup>48</sup> In 1979, during President Carter's tenure, the United States officially accepted the PRC as the legitimate government of China and ceased formal diplomatic relations with the ROC. However, the Taiwan Relations Act still allows the US to transfer armaments to Taiwan.<sup>49</sup> These transfers frequently lead to protests from the PRC, which considers Taiwan a rebellious territory within China's geographic boundaries.

The PRC, almost since its inception, has sought to regain control of Taiwan. However, relations tend to stay reasonably quiet except when Taiwan appears to consider

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46. Thucydides, *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War* (New York: Free Press, 2008) 43.

47. US Central Intelligence Agency, "CIA World Factbook."

48. Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *Strait Talk: United States-Taiwan Relations and the Crisis with China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 45-68.

49. *Taiwan Relations Act*, 1979, <http://www.ait.org.tw/en/taiwan-relations-act.html>.

declaring independence. Taiwan's *de facto* independence has been unimpeded since 1949, but a formal declaration would seriously encroach on the PRC's sensibilities, which Thucydides would characterize as its sense of honor.

At present, both sides seem to be generally willing to accept the status quo. Taiwan is avoiding the subject of independence, and the PRC is not overtly pressing unification. In the opinion of one analyst, "relations between the Chinese mainland and Taiwan are at their best in decades."<sup>50</sup> A great deal of this stability resulted from the leadership of the Taiwan's current President, Ma Ying-jeou. Since 2008, President Ma has signed fifteen agreements with the PRC. He is also careful to avoid inflammatory rhetoric. There is, however, no peace agreement that can enable long-term stability between the two entities because the underlying problems still endure. Taiwan operates like an independent state, and China will not indefinitely accept it as such. Furthermore, future problems may only be a leadership change away. Subsequent leaders of Taiwan could easily incite conflict by pursuing independence. Conversely, China could decide the time is right to pursue unification aggressively.

Kadena Air Base, Okinawa is the closest US Air Force installation to Taiwan. If the US chose to intervene militarily on behalf of Taiwan, the F-15s, KC-135s, E-3s, MC-130s, and HH-60s stationed at Kadena would play a central role.

### **The Korean Peninsula**

The Korean Peninsula is another potential conflict area with unresolved tension from a decades-old war. At the end of WWII, the Soviet Union and the United States set up separate governments on the peninsula. North of the 38th Parallel, the Soviets established the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) under the leadership of Kim Il-Sung. South of the Parallel, the US set up the Republic of Korea (ROK). It was an unnatural separation. Despite periodic occupation by the Chinese and Japanese, Korea had a unified history. In 1950, Kim Il-Sung initiated a North Korean invasion of South Korea. The UN countered with a US-led coalition that fought to preserve South Korean independence. After General Douglas MacArthur's Inchon landing later in 1950 and his

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50. Dennis Hickey, "Wake Up to Reality: Taiwan, the Chinese Mainland and Peace Across the Taiwan Strait," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 18, no. 1 (March 2013): 2.

subsequent advance to the Yalu River, the UN forces appeared poised to wipe out the North Koreans. At that point, China sent hundreds of thousands of troops into the peninsula. The Korean War raged on with China and the Soviet Union backing the DPRK, and the US and UN reinforcing the ROK. During the last two years, the sides were deadlocked near the 38th Parallel. An armistice was negotiated in 1953, but a de jure state of war remains.

The underlying desire for Korean unification still exists on both sides. After the war, South Korea pursued economic growth, while North Korea focused on prolonging the Kim Dynasty and enhancing the DPRK's military capability. Today, South Korea has a modern military force capable of competing with North Korea's numerically superior force, but still relies on US might for extended deterrence.

The USAF operates from two major installations on the Korean Peninsula, Osan Air Base and Kunsan Air Base. Three F-16 squadrons and one A-10 squadron are currently stationed at the bases. These forces clearly defend against the North Korean threat, but could they could also be used in other regional conflicts? While the US would prefer a different answer, it is unlikely that the ROK government would agree to any use of bases within its territory in a confrontation with China that do not involve the Korean Peninsula.<sup>51</sup> For the South Koreans, *fear* and *interest* are the motivating factors. China's close proximity and large missile force drives the *fear*. Seoul finds the idea of being brought into a conflict with China over someone else's dispute very unappealing. In regards to *interest*, China is the ROK's largest trading partner and buys three times more Korean exports than does the US.<sup>52</sup>

### **The South China Sea**

The South China Sea is a potential conflict area where the primary dispute is over resources. As previously indicated, China has a great need for oil. The US Energy Information Administration estimates that there may be enough crude oil beneath the

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51. David J. Berteau, Micheal J. Green, and Zach Cooper, *Assessing the Asia-Pacific Rebalance* (Center for Strategic and International Studies, December 2014), [http://csis.org/files/publication/150105\\_Berteau\\_AssessingAsiaPacificRebal\\_Web.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/150105_Berteau_AssessingAsiaPacificRebal_Web.pdf).

52. World Trade Organization, *Trade Profile Statistics*, accessed February 8, 2015, <http://stat.wto.org/CountryProfile/WSDBCountryPFHome.aspx?Language=E>.

South China Sea to supply China for more than sixty years.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, the area also has rich fisheries and a sizeable supply of natural gas.



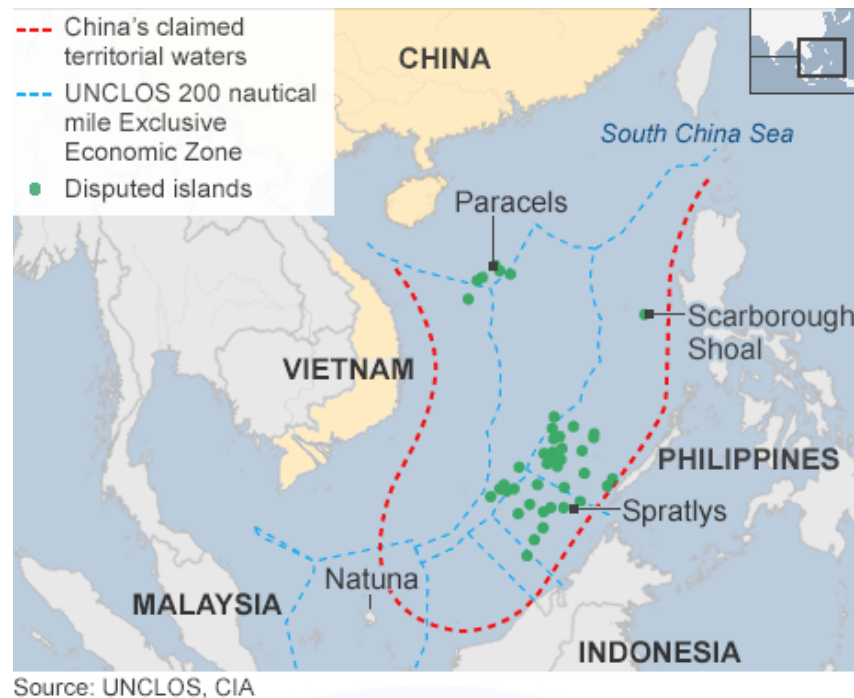
**Figure 11. China's Nine-Dash Line.**

Source: Stratfor. <https://www.stratfor.com/weekly/paradox-chinas-naval-strategy>

China depicts its claim in the South China Sea using a nine-dash line similar to the one shown in figure 11. The Chinese claim overlaps claims made by the Philippines, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia, and Taiwan, as indicated in figure 12. The most disputed areas in the South China Sea are the Paracel Islands, the Spratly Islands, and Scarborough Shoal. The Paracel Islands dispute pits China against Vietnam. The primary claimants for the last two are China and the Philippines, but several nations claim outposts in the Spratlys.

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53. Robert Haddick, *Fire on the Water*, 18.



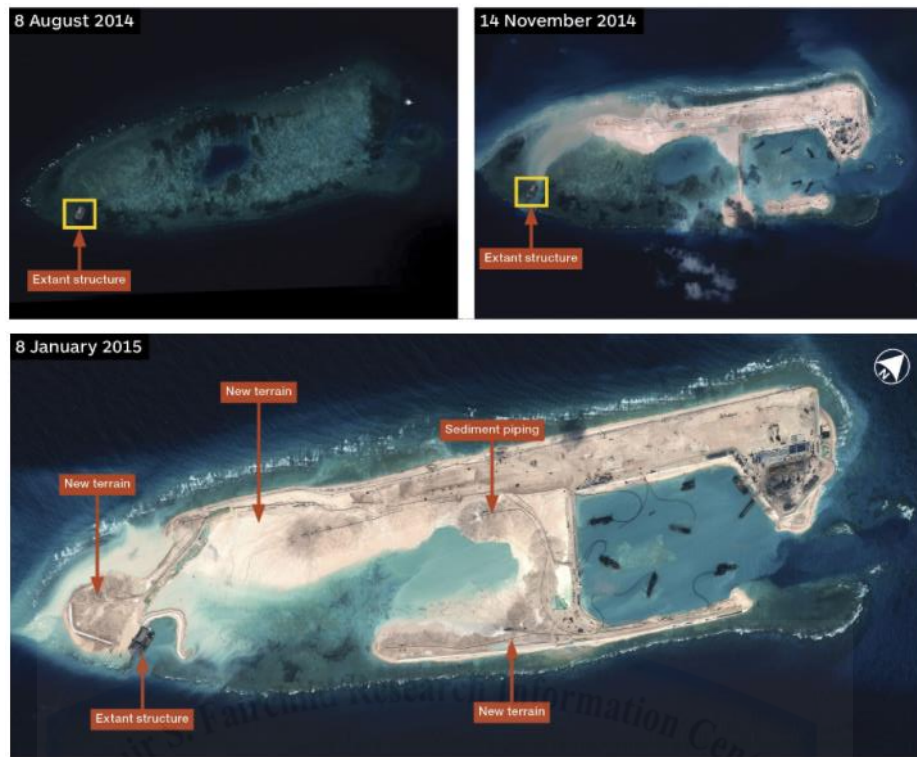
**Figure 12. Territorial Claims in the South China Sea.**

Source: BBC. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-30173962>

The official US position regarding the South China Sea is in the 2015 National Security Strategy. It states, “We denounce coercion and assertive behaviors that threaten escalation. We encourage open channels of dialogue to resolve disputes peacefully in accordance with international law. We also support the early conclusion of an effective code of conduct for the South China Sea between China and the Association of Southeast Asian States (ASEAN).”<sup>54</sup> More simply put, the US would like to see the issues resolved peacefully in accordance with international law.

54. United States, *National Security Strategy*, 13.





**Figure 13. China's Construction at Fiery Cross Reef in the South China Sea.**

Source: HIS Jane's.

China, however, has chosen not to pursue its claims through diplomatic channels. Instead, the Chinese appear to be employing a salami-slicing strategy approach, with which they slowly wrestle control of the South China Sea from their weaker neighbors. This effort has included the construction of an artificial island to house an airfield. During the last year, Chinese equipment has transformed Fiery Cross Reef from a largely submerged coral formation into a sandy island large enough to support a runway and a parking ramp.<sup>55</sup> If this project indeed becomes an air base, it could offer two benefits for China: (1) allow further coercion of other South China Sea claimants and (2) provide greater protection of Chinese shipping coming into the area through the Strait of Malacca.

The US Air Force does not have any bases in close proximity to the South China Sea. Until the early 1990s, the USAF operated out of Clark Air Base in the Philippines.

55. "China Building South China Sea Island Big Enough for Airstrip: Report," *Reuters*, 21 November 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/21/us-china-southchinasea-airstrip-idUSKCN0J526B20141121>.

A number of factors contributed to the decision to close the base. From the US perspective, the end of the Cold War brought its necessity into question. Then, in 1991, Mt Pinatubo erupted and covered the base in volcanic ash, collapsing some buildings and causing an estimated \$500 million in damage. Further evidence suggests that the most significant factor may have actually been anti-American sentiment in the Philippines government. Negotiations to extend the agreement for Clark that occurred before the eruption were subsequently described as “acrimonious.”<sup>56</sup> Later in 1991, the Philippines asked the US to withdraw from the massive American naval base at Subic Bay. Reports of the Philippine Senate’s debate claim, “American military presence was assailed as a vestige of colonialism and an affront to Philippine sovereignty.”<sup>57</sup>

Recent flare-ups in the South China Sea have caused the Philippines to reconsider this action. In 2014, President Obama signed an agreement with the Philippines to increase the frequency of US troop rotations to the islands. At this time, however, there is no formal agreement to add a USAF base in the Philippines. The US relationship with Manila is a complex one involving Thucydides’ entire trio. The Philippine’s economic interest in the South China Sea leads to disputes with China. The confluence of fear and interest encourages Manila to seek a closer relationship with the United States. However, the Filipinos also have a sense of honor that considers American forces “an affront to Philippine sovereignty.”<sup>58</sup>

Interest is the primary motivator for the larger multilateral struggle over the South China Sea. Every party is scrambling to claim outcroppings of coral, sand, and rock as an intermediate step in their quest for ownership of valuable fisheries and undersea energy reserves.

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56. John M. Broder, “U.S. Reaches Accord With Manila, Will Leave Clark Air Base : Philippines: Volcano Causes Abandonment of Field. But Americans Will Keep Subic Naval Base for 10 Years.,” *Los Angeles Times*, 18 July 1991, [http://articles.latimes.com/1991-07-18/news/mn-3381\\_1\\_clark-air-base](http://articles.latimes.com/1991-07-18/news/mn-3381_1_clark-air-base).

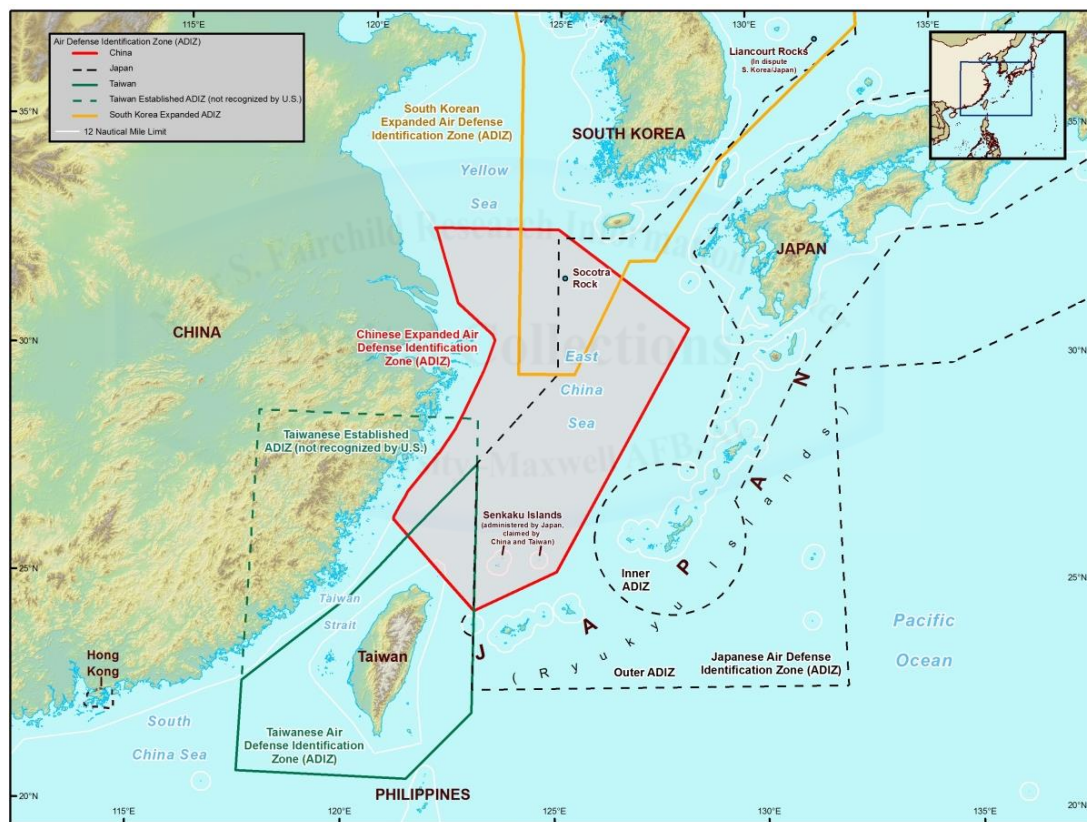
57. David E. Sanger, “Philippines Orders U.S. to Leave Strategic Navy Base at Subic Bay,” *The New York Times*, 28 December 1991. <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/12/28/world/philippines-orders-us-to-leave-strategic-navy-base-at-subic-bay.html>.

58. Broder, “U.S. Reaches Accord With Manila, Will Leave Clark Air Base.”



## The East China Sea

The final potential conflict area involves a resource struggle between China and Japan. This dispute also has roots dating back to the end of World War II. China claims that a set of islands it refers to as the Diaoyu should have been returned to Chinese control. Because Taiwan considers itself to be the legitimate government of the entire Chinese homeland, it also claims the Diaoyu. Japan refers to these islands as the Senkakus.<sup>59</sup> The Japanese assert that the islands were not specifically renounced; therefore, they remain part of Japan. Furthermore, they claim to have done more to administer the islands than any other state.<sup>60</sup>



**Figure 14. East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone.**

Source: 2014 DOD China MSD Report.

59. Council on Foreign Relations, “China’s Maritime Disputes,” <http://www.cfr.org/chinasea> (accessed 14 November 2014).

60. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *The Senkaku Islands Pamphlet* (Tokyo, Japan: March 2014).

These islands, like those in the South China Sea, are relevant primarily because they legitimize their owner's claim to resources in and under the sea. The fisheries around the island are rich, and the 100 billion barrels of crude oil believed to be in the area is enough to supply China for 15 years.<sup>61</sup> In a variation of the salami-slicing approach being used in the South China Sea, China extended its air defense identification zone (ADIZ) in the East China Sea to create the overlap depicted in figure 14.<sup>62</sup> Interest and honor converge to fuel this dispute between longstanding rivals Japan and China.

The closest US air base to the Senkakus is Kadena AB, whose forces were previously described.

Informed basing decisions require a thorough understanding of potential conflict areas. In the PACOM AOR, conflict appears most probable in four geographic zones: Taiwan, the Korean Peninsula, the South China Sea, and the East China Sea. The dispute in Taiwan is primarily one of honor. Both the PRC and the ROC believe they have sovereignty over the disputed territory. On Korean Peninsula, two sides with opposing systems each long to reunify a historically united populace. Honor and fear thwart compromise. The disputes in the South China Sea and the East China Sea involve battles for resources. Interest is the primary motivator in these disputes but honor plays a role as well. The four areas within PACOM that have the most potential for conflict can be easily understood by using Thucydides' timeless trio of fear, honor, and interest.<sup>63</sup>

### **Existing US Alliances**

In 1925, Billy Mitchell wrote, "Due to the strategic position of the Philippine Islands there should be no air force or local defense units maintained because the locality could not be defended in case of war."<sup>64</sup> Without referring to a specific threat, Mitchell observed that the Philippine Islands, a US territory at the time, were so remote that they were indefensible. There have been significant improvements in transportation since

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61. Robert Haddick, *Fire on the Water*, 17.

62. Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China*, 4.

63. Thucydides, *The Landmark Thucydides*, 43.

64. William Mitchell, *Winged Defense: The Development and Possibilities of Modern Air Power--Economic and Military* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2006), 219.

Mitchell made his claim ninety years ago. These improvements make US alliances possible, even in geographically distant areas such as the Philippines.

As a reflection of these new realities, formal defense agreements create the most significant demand for US forces in the Pacific. The geographic area the US is formally committed to protect is enormous. In addition to defending Hawaii, Guam, and the Marianas islands, the United States has treaty alliances with Australia, Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand, as well as protectorate obligations with the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, the Taiwan Relations Act unilaterally commits the US to aid in the defense of the people of Taiwan.<sup>66</sup> The following analysis categorically examines the arrangements listed above, paying particular attention to agreements involved in potential conflict areas.

### **Protectorate Obligations**

The relationship between the United States and the Pacific nations of Palau, the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia is a compact of free association. The three partners are independent and sovereign nations, but the United States has agreed to provide for their defense. These arrangements originated in the post-WWII era. After the US freed these islands from Japanese rule, the United Nations assigned administering authority for the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI) to the United States.<sup>67</sup> Although the three states, formerly part of the TTPI, have now gained independence, they still grant the US certain rights within their territory, including military basing privileges. In exchange for these rights, the United States has agreed to provide for their defense. None of the three nations has its own defense force.<sup>68</sup> Instead, their citizens are eligible to serve in the US armed forces.<sup>69</sup> These states, combined with Guam and Hawaii, provide a strategic East-West link across the Pacific. The protectorate

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65. USPACOM, "USPACOM Area of Responsibility."

66. *Taiwan Relations Act*.

67. United States Dept of the Interior, "About the Compact of Free Association," <http://www.uscompact.org/about/cofa.php>.

68. US Central Intelligence Agency, "CIA World Factbook."

69. US Citizenship and Immigration Services, "US Citizenship and Immigration Services Fact Sheet," 13 February 2008, <http://www.fsmgov.org/status.pdf>, 4.

islands are not presently threatened, but the US is obligated to defend a vast expanse of the Pacific in exchange for rights in this strategic band.

### **Mutual Defense Treaties**

In a combination of five separate treaties, some bilateral and some multilateral, the United States agreed to “act to meet the common danger” in response to any attack against the following allies in the Asia-Pacific region: Japan, Australia, South Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand. One of the multilateral treaties, the Southeast Asia Treaty, also commits the United States to the defense of British and French possessions in the region.<sup>70</sup> Some potential applications of the mutual defense provisions of these treaties are straightforward, while others are ambiguous.

The Republic of Korea Treaty, signed as the Korean War ended in 1953, is an example of an uncomplicated, bilateral agreement. The arrangement was clearly designed to counter the threat from North Korea. An attack on of the South Korean mainland would trigger action under the provisions of this treaty. Small skirmishes over disputed islands have occurred in the past, but they have not led to significant US actions.

The treaties with Japan and the Philippines could face tough tests because the two nations are involved in maritime disputes with China. Any attack on Japanese or Philippine territory would clearly meet the standard for US intervention. However, problems are more likely to arise from the development of contested undersea resources or fishing incursions into exclusive economic zones. Conflicts of this nature are not well defined in mutual defense treaties.

In Article I of the US-Japanese Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security, the parties agree to settle international disputes “by peaceful means.” Article V states, “Each Party recognizes that an armed attack against either Party in the territories under the administration of Japan would be dangerous” and “declares that it would act to meet the common danger.”<sup>71</sup> Some scenarios in the East China Sea, however, do not fit neatly into this construct. China could begin to extract resources from the disputed area around

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70. Department Of State, “US Collective Defense Arrangements,” 8 August 2006, <http://www.state.gov/s/l/treaty/collectivedefense/>.

71. “Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security Between the United States of America and Japan,” 19 January 1960, [http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/japan/mutual\\_cooperation\\_treaty.pdf](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/japan/mutual_cooperation_treaty.pdf).

the Senkaku Islands while avoiding both peaceful resolution and armed confrontation. Former US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel and President Barak Obama have each asserted that the treaty includes the disputed islands. Yet, neither has specified if fishing or offshore oil drilling constitute an attack on Japan.

A similar standoff between China and America's Pacific partners is unfolding in the South China Sea. In this case, there are two applicable agreements. The first is the Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States and the Republic of the Philippines. The language is almost identical to that found in the treaty with Japan, but with one significant addition. Attacks on military or public vessels are designated the same as attacks on sovereign territory. The second agreement, the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, addresses other situations. If the "inviolability," "integrity," or "sovereignty" of any ally "is threatened *in any way other than by armed attack*" (emphasis added) the signatories agree to consult to determine what measures should be taken.<sup>72</sup> China's current expansion into the South China Sea clearly falls under this consultation provision. The chosen measures could be military or not, but the responsibility of USPACOM is to ensure desirable options are available in the event of potential contingencies.

Not all alliances are created equal. The so-called "special relationship" between the US and the UK forms a stronger tie across the Atlantic than exists with any other European member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In the Pacific, Australia, Japan, and South Korea align most closely with the United States. Australia has strong cultural ties to the United States and allows the US military services to operate from and train on their bases. Korea and Japan permit the presence of even larger numbers of American military personnel. In contrast, the Philippines and Thailand have each asked the United States to vacate military bases.

### **The United States' Unique Relationship with Taiwan**

An American law, rather than an international treaty, governs US relations with Taiwan. When President Jimmy Carter formally recognized the PRC in 1979, Taiwan's government no longer received formal US recognition. At that point, the Taiwan

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72. "Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of the Philippines," 30 August 1951, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/phil001.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/phil001.asp).



Relations Act became the legal basis for the US relationship with Taiwan. That act includes provisions for military partnership. Specifically, it states that “It is the policy of the United States . . . to provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character; and to maintain the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or the social or economic system, of the people on Taiwan.”<sup>73</sup> While the act does indicate a US desire to have the future of Taiwan resolved by peaceful means, the language is not as binding as that of a typical defense alliance. The United States is to “maintain the capacity . . . to resist.”<sup>74</sup> This statement is more ambiguous than the commitment to “act to meet the common danger” found in the formal agreements with other regional partners.<sup>75</sup>

The most significant consideration regarding the US-Taiwan relationship is that it is more ambiguous than many of the other partnerships in the region. The ROC government is not officially recognized, no treaty exists between the two entities, and the US does not have forces stationed on Taiwan.

The United States has many security partners in the Asia-Pacific. The group of commitments includes unilateral, bilateral, and multilateral arrangements. Together, the relationships commit the US to defend an immense geographic area. But each relationship is unique. A strategist must understand the nuances of each commitment if he is to make well-informed posture decisions.

### **Budget Constraints**

One natural response to the security environment in the Pacific would be to divert additional national defense resources to the theater. However, there are many factors in the current budgetary situation creating friction that impedes such a move. Strategists working at the theater level must take into consideration the larger national context, especially in regards to budget matters.

Defense budget challenges are just a subcomponent of a larger fiscal dilemma faced by the United States. The current federal debt totals \$18 trillion.<sup>76</sup> Former

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73. *Taiwan Relations Act*.

74. *Taiwan Relations Act*.

75. Department Of State, “US Collective Defense Arrangements.”

76. US Treasury, “Debt to the Penny,” <http://www.treasurydirect.gov/NP/debt/current> (accessed 8 February 2015).

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen observed, “The most significant threat to our national security is our debt.”<sup>77</sup> As a response to this large debt, Congress and the President approved the Budget Control Act of 2011 (BCA). The BCA imposed significant limits on defense spending among other things. These limits are commonly referred to collectively as sequestration.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) suggests that the DOD must choose one of two options to operate within the limits of sequestration: (1) reduce force structure or (2) reduce acquisitions and operations.<sup>78</sup> If the DOD continues to operate under any version of the BCA, gaining the funding to increase basing in the Pacific will face an uphill battle. Expensive basing concepts or capabilities enhancements that purport to solve all the strategic and operational challenges in the Pacific are fiscally unrealistic. While there is hope that the limits of the BCA will decrease in future legislation, complete relief is unlikely.

Any significant increases in Pacific spending must come from some other portion of the DOD budget. While transfer of units or funding from other AORs is possible, this approach faces challenges as well. The plan for the rebalance to the Asia-Pacific included force reallocations resulting from reductions in Europe and the Middle East. Geopolitical challenges such as the ongoing Russian destabilization of Ukraine and the emergence of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) have dramatically reduced the prospects for such a rebalancing to produce large-scale force structure increases in PACOM’s AOR.

Despite the budgetary dilemma, there are reasons to believe the rebalance to Asia may still receive priority for funding for PACAF. As Deputy Secretary of Defense in 2012, Ash Carter stated, “[T]he rebalance is reflected in force structure decisions . . . new investments . . . innovative operational plans . . . posture and presence.” Later in his speech, he articulated significant increases in the US Navy’s commitment to the region. The Navy’s Pacific force posture is set to gain the following: “one aircraft carrier, four

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77. “Mullen: Debt Is Top National Security Threat - CNN.com,” <http://www.cnn.com/2010/US/08/27/debt.security.mullen/> (accessed 30 November 2014).

78. “Approaches for Scaling Back the Defense Department’s Budget Plans,” *Congressional Budget Office*, <http://www.cbo.gov/publication/43997> (accessed 8 February 2015).

destroyers, three Zumwalt destroyers, ten Littoral Combat Ships, and two submarines in the Pacific.”<sup>79</sup> The Air Force may also receive some additional force structure—if *PACAF can demonstrate that it will be used wisely*.

The budget situation contains a mix of positive and negative factors that boil down to two simple observations pertaining to the present analysis: (1) the umbrella of the Asia-Pacific rebalance may enable PACAF to achieve some force structure increases if such increases can be fully justified; (2) budgetary constraints may prevent such increases and compel PACOM and PACAF to implement the theater’s peacetime air strategy with the current force structure.

### **Summary**

The United States must overcome demanding geography and contend with mounting competitors to protect its diverse regional interests during a period of constrained resources. The American vision for the Asia-Pacific is a prosperous, rules-based system with US leadership. The Chinese Dream also seeks regional prosperity but under a system guided by Beijing. A collision of the American vision and the Chinese Dream could lead to Pacific hostilities. The challenge for US strategists is to develop a force posture that both deters undesirable conflicts and protects American interests.

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79. Berteau, Green, and Cooper, *Assessing the Asia-Pacific Rebalance*, 5.



## Chapter 2

### US Grand Strategy for the Asia-Pacific Region

A coherent US Air Force posture for the Pacific must nest within the national grand strategy for the region and PACOM's military strategy. Because basing decisions lead to expensive, long-term investments, an ideal basing strategy for the Asia-Pacific should possess enough flexibility to remain viable even if the overarching grand strategy changes. Therefore, this chapter describes the grand strategic level through the lenses of the predominant international relations theories of realism and liberalism. Both the present strategy and two possible alternatives are explored to establish the expected boundaries of the future national-policy spectrum.

The first policy option examined is the extant grand strategy, which is called deep engagement. It is an approach firmly rooted in liberalism. For the past twenty years, the US has remained publicly committed to deep engagement, but criticism of it is beginning to increase. The second and third policy options are the most significant competitors to deep engagement. They emerge from two branches of realist IR ideology. Offshore balancing comes from a branch called defensive realism. The other branch, offensive realism, predicts the US will adopt an option called containment.

The first three sections of this chapter address deep engagement, offshore balancing, and containment. The fourth section describes the implications of the security dilemma, another classic IR concept, for the Asia-Pacific theater. The chapter concludes with a synthesis of the three strategies that highlights the strengths and weaknesses of each and bounds the range of possible grand strategies that Air Force basing decisions might support.

#### **Deep Engagement: The Liberal Internationalist Position**

The rise of China and the growth of the Asia-Pacific's relative share of the global economy began to attract the attention of foreign policy leaders and international relations scholars more than two decades ago. In 1987 Paul Kennedy predicted that global economic production would shift toward Asia and away from the US, Russia, and

Europe. He also predicted that China's increased economic strength would enhance its long-term military power and combine to generate "power-political implications."<sup>1</sup>

Kennedy was right, but the Cold War rivalry and subsequent turmoil in the Middle East overshadowed Asia-Pacific trends until the mid-1990s. Around that time, the Clinton administration developed a policy of deep engagement for the Asia-Pacific. In 1995, Joseph Nye, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, outlined the US policy for East Asia in a *Foreign Affairs* article entitled "The Case for Deep Engagement."<sup>2</sup>

Nye's *Foreign Affairs* article explained that the US policy of deep engagement in East Asia had three components: (1) reinforcing and strengthening alliances, (2) maintaining a forward-based military presence, and (3) developing regional institutions. The overall goal was to maintain US leadership in the region and to ensure stability and economic prosperity. Nye claimed, "Our national interests demand our deep engagement."<sup>3</sup> Because deep engagement remains the stated US policy and a primary driver of US forward presence, military strategists need an understanding of its three components.

### **Reinforcing and Strengthening Alliances**

When the Cold War ended and the Soviet threat dissolved, regional partners had questions about whether US military forces would remain in the Asia-Pacific. Although the administration of President George H. W. Bush initiated an overall military drawdown, it maintained the US presence in the region. The Clinton Administration sought to reinforce and strengthen East Asian alliances in an effort to maintain US regional leadership. The basis of that leadership was and is strong US relationships with South Korea, Japan, and Australia.

Recent advocates of deep engagement believe the policy should continue. In 2012, Stephen Brooks, John Ikenberry, and William Wohlforth asserted that deep

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1. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York, NY: Random House, 1987), 538, 451, and 458).

2. Joseph S. Nye, "The Case for Deep Engagement," *Foreign Affairs* 74, no. 4 (July 1995): 90. In addition to his career in public service, Joseph Nye is a prominent IR theorist with extensive academic experience including serving as the Dean of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

3. Nye, "The Case for Deep Engagement."

engagement makes the US alliance system “far more robust and harder to challenge than if the United States were to disengage.”<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, they added that “securing partners and allies in key regions reduces their incentives to generate military capabilities.”<sup>5</sup> Japan and South Korea are prime examples of this assertion. The two nations have historical animosity for one another, but the presence of US military forces in both nations provides stability. US alliances also deter aggression from other regional powers outside the alliance system.

### **Maintaining a Forward-Based Military Presence**

The second component of Nye’s deep engagement strategy is a forward-based troop presence. Military presence is a key indicator of commitment to a partner and to a region. Conversely, the withdrawal of military forces signals that interest in a region is declining. Forward basing is more than a symbolic gesture. In a region with unpredictable actors such as North Korea, forward forces provide capability for a timely response. As previously noted, the vast expanse of the Pacific inhibits rapid movement into theater; thus, presence is particularly important in East Asia. Forward-based forces also convey to potential aggressors a tangible certainty that belligerent actions will be costly. Nye further observes that military presence “ensures the United States a seat at the table on Asian issues.”<sup>6</sup> Although deep engagement is predominantly a liberal construct, this consideration also fits well into realist philosophy. In the words of Robert Art, “Lurking behind the scenes, unstated but explicit, lies the military muscle that gives meaning to the posturing of diplomats. Especially for great powers, but for the lesser ones, too, military power undergirds the other instruments of statecraft.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Developing Regional Institutions**

The first two components of deep engagement, alliances and military presence, are in many ways reminiscent of traditional realist balance-of-power politics. It is Nye’s third ingredient, the development of regional institutions, that gives deep engagement its

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4. Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth, “Don’t Come Home, America,” *International Security* 37, no. 3 (Winter 2012): 22.

5. Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlforth, “Don’t Come Home, America,” 21.

6. Nye, “The Case for Deep Engagement.”

7. Robert J. Art, “The Fungibility of Force,” in *The Use of Force: Military Power and International Politics*, ed. Robert J. Art and Kenneth N. Waltz, 7th Edition (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 4.

liberal flavor. He asserts that institutions complement American bilateral ties and serve as “confidence-building” measures for the region.<sup>8</sup>

Since Nye and his associates in the Clinton administration developed the deep engagement strategy for the Asia-Pacific, the importance of institutions has grown significantly. This increased importance is directly proportional to the growth in Chinese economic and military power. In previous decades, the US could use military coercion to shape Chinese behavior with relatively little risk of retaliation. However, China’s military build-up makes Chinese leaders increasingly less likely to tolerate anything perceived as bullying. If current trends are not reversed, the potential to use unilateral military coercion against China will continue to erode. In place of such coercion, deep engagement advocates believe that institutions can accommodate the rise of China into the Western rules-based order.

A 2008 *Foreign Affairs* article by Ikenberry, a prominent proponent of institutional IR theory, presents an updated case for international institutions as part of a deep-engagement strategy in the Asia-Pacific. To understand the need for institutions one must first examine the struggle between great powers to establish an international order that accommodates their interests. Rising states seek to use their newly acquired power to reshape the international order in their favor. Conversely, declining or status-quo states seek to avoid a decrease in their influence and worry about the security implications of a new arrangement.<sup>9</sup> Three major factors shape the calculus of the rising power as its decision makers decide whether to join the existing international order or challenge it. The first factor is the nature of the rising state’s regime. Second is the degree of the regime’s dissatisfaction with the old order. Ikenberry claims the most decisive factor is the character of the international order itself. From this proposition, he argues that the US should build its grand strategy around an effort to strengthen the rules and institutions of the Western order so that China has “greater incentives for integration than for opposition.”<sup>10</sup>

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8. Nye, “The Case for Deep Engagement.”

9. G. John Ikenberry, “The Rise of China and the Future of the West,” *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 1 (February 1, 2008): 23–37.

10. Ikenberry, “The Rise of China and the Future of the West.”

Ikenberry believes that the survival of the Western system will protect US interests even after the relative power of the US has eroded. Furthermore, he argues, “If the defining struggle of the twenty-first century is between China and the United States, China will have the advantage.” However, if the struggle is between China and a Western system, “the West will triumph.”<sup>11</sup> Ikenberry bases this conclusion on the presumption that farsighted Chinese leaders will recognize international cooperation is necessary to prosper in the modern, global economy. He also asserts that nuclear deterrence has eliminated great power war as a mechanism of change in international order. Large-scale wars are unlikely and nuclear weapons do little to prevent incremental encroachments that slowly accumulate small advantages while remaining just short of a *casus belli*. The most likely threat to the Western institutional order is not war, it is that fragmented bilateral and “minilateral” arrangements will develop that enable China to build its own separate system. To ensure the durability of the Western system, the US must lead it in such a way that it remains expansive and cohesive.<sup>12</sup> To him, the international order should be so expansive that the only logical choice for China’s leaders is to integrate into the existing system of political and economic institutions such as the UN, the WTO, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank.

Institutions sound so promising that one almost forgets why decisions about force posture or basing even matter to the deep-engagement strategy. The answer lies in two words: assurance and deterrence. Having military forces stationed inside an ally’s territory gives that country tangible assurance of American commitment. For many nations living in the shadow of China, the absence of such assurance would make it difficult to remain strongly committed to the institutions of the Western order. Using a combination of military and economic coercion, China might be able to convince them to join in a rival system. The deterrence provided by forward presence is the other side of the assurance coin. The same forces that reassure allies deter potential aggressors. Forward basing provides strong evidence of US commitment, undercutting prospective coercion and discouraging hostile military action. Although institutions represent the

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11. Ikenberry, “The Rise of China and the Future of the West.”

12. Ikenberry, “The Rise of China and the Future of the West.”

primary framework of deep-engagement strategy, military force posture undergirds the framework with a foundation of assurance and deterrence.

### **Offshore Balancing: The Defensive Realist Strategy**

Although deep engagement has publicly defined the American grand strategy in the Asia-Pacific for two decades, one cannot be certain that it will continue to be US policy in the region. Realist IR philosophy has a long tradition and is currently gaining momentum in Washington. Realists boast that they astutely warned against invading Iraq prior to 2003. Thirty-three prominent realist scholars purchased an advertisement in the *New York Times* stating, “War with Iraq is not in America’s national interests” (emphasis in original). They predicted, “Iraq is a deeply divided society that the United States would have to occupy and police for many years to create a viable state.” The advertisement appeared in the 26 September 2002 edition of the *NY Times*.<sup>13</sup> In hindsight, many Americans see wisdom in their warning. Fourteen years of uninterrupted war have caused policy makers to re-think their positions on overseas military engagements. Offshore balancing is a realist strategy that would reduce US military commitments in the Asia-Pacific.

A short synopsis of realist international-relations theory is necessary before delving into the details of offshore balancing. Realism emphasizes states as the primary actors in an international system that is anarchic. Anarchy here does not mean chaos or disorder. It simply indicates there is no central authority above states to regulate their behavior. Classical realism centers on a belief that humans are born with a lust for power. Because states are led by humans, states also exhibit an insatiable desire for power.<sup>14</sup> In the 1970s, structural realism supplanted classical realism as the most accepted realist framework. Kenneth Waltz, the father of structural realism, asserts, “In anarchy, security is the highest end . . . The first concern of states is not to maximize power but to maintain their position in the system.”<sup>15</sup> States are motivated by survival.

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13. Robert J. Art et al., “War with Iraq Is Not in America’s National Interest,” *New York Times*, 26 September 2002, <http://mearsheimer.uchicago.edu/pdfs/P0012.pdf>.

14. John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Updated Edition (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014) 30, 17.

15. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (Long Grove, Ill.: Waveland Press Inc, 2010), 126.



Because an anarchic system is a self-help system, states' desire for survival determines their actions. In a concept known as balance-of-power theory, Waltz argues weaker states follow their survival instinct by allying with one another to balance against the power of stronger states. Stronger states understand the tendencies of weaker states, so they avoid actions that could upset the balance of power causing other states to ally against them. Waltz's brand of realism has been labeled defensive realism because states act defensively to protect the balance of power, generally preserving the status quo.<sup>16</sup>

Stephen Walt modified balance of power theory into balance-of-threat theory, providing an even more useful defensive realist model. He argued that states ally to balance against *threats* not simply against power. States generally use four variables to assess the level of a threat: aggregate power, proximity, offensive capability, and offensive intentions.<sup>17</sup> Walt's balance-of-threat theory is the foundation for offshore balancing. An American strategy of offshore balancing would reduce commitments and troop levels in the Asia-Pacific with the expectation that regional powers would ally together to balance against any potential hegemon perceived as a threat. Under this construct, the US would be the balancer of last resort. Proximity and offensive intentions work in favor of the US because it is far away and has no apparent offensive intentions in the region. Therefore, weaker countries are more likely to ally with the US than China, which is closer and has more ambiguous aspirations.

Two years after Robert Nye outlined the deep engagement strategy in *Foreign Affairs*, Christopher Layne presented offshore balancing as an alternative. In an *International Security* article titled "From Preponderance to Offshore Balancing", Layne characterized the American commitment to worldwide deep engagement as a "preponderance" strategy that was unsustainable. He predicted that the relative decline of US economic strength and the rise of new powers would drive a change in strategy.

Layne and other realists astutely point out some of the flaws in deep-engagement strategy. Not only is deep engagement expensive, the desire to provide extended deterrence can lead to active involvement in matters that are peripheral to national

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16. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 19-20.

17. Stephen M. Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," *International Security* 9, no. 4 (Spring 1985): 9.



interests, sometimes merely to retain the credibility that is central to deterrence. Offshore balancers assert that the United States should reduce overseas defense agreements. Shedding such commitments gives the US strategic flexibility to evaluate future military engagements on the basis of US national interests without concern for adhering to predetermined agreements. It also prevents weaker allies from dragging the United States into wars it could otherwise avoid.

Offshore balancing, according to Layne, gives the US “a high degree of strategic choice” and “a substantial measure of control over its fate” thereby “minimizing the risk of US involvement in a future great power (possibly nuclear) war.”<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, advocates claim offshore balancing provides cost savings because it requires less forward troop presence. Layne states “offshore balancing would sharply reduce the size and role of US ground forces. The strategy’s backbone would be robust nuclear deterrence, air power, and –most important—overwhelming naval power.”<sup>19</sup> Although offshore balancing involves a decrease in overall forces, the role of airpower remains vital.

Essentially, offshore balancers believe that deep engagement commits the United States to alliances that impose too great a security burden on the US despite the fact that American security is less threatened than the partner nation’s security. Offshore balancers want to place the burden back on the states with the more acute security concerns. Layne believes “The United States is secure enough from external threat that, should it wish to do so, it could choose restraint over intervention, nation over empire, and emphasis on domestic needs over external ambitions.”<sup>20</sup>

An offshore balancing strategy would clearly have a smaller forward footprint than does deep engagement. Should China or some other regional power engage in threatening activities against neighboring states, the weaker states would be expected to balance against the threat in accordance with Walt’s theory. US military power would only augment that nation’s force if additional balancing became necessary. As Layne indicated, offshore balancing would emphasize airpower and seapower, while deemphasizing land forces. Even if fewer forces were forward deployed, contingency

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18. Christopher Layne, “From Preponderance to Offshore Balancing,” *International Security* 22, no. 1 (Summer 1997): 122, 87.

19. Layne, “From Preponderance to Offshore Balancing,” 112-113.

20. Layne, “From Preponderance to Offshore Balancing,” 124.

basing options would have to be maintained or the desired strategic flexibility could evaporate. Additionally, the US Air Force could potentially contribute to seapower, the other defense priority in offshore balancing. Air Force aircraft could enhance US seapower by training and equipping for the performance of air interdiction of maritime targets (AIMT) and maritime air support (MAS).

### **Containment: The Offensive Realist Strategy**

Not every realist believes the United States will employ a strategy of offshore balancing. In his book, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, John Mearsheimer presents the case for offensive realism and predicts the United States will lead a containment coalition against China.<sup>21</sup> Offensive realism is another form of structural realism, which Mearsheimer derives from the following five assumptions. First, “the international system is anarchic.” Second, “great powers inherently possess some offensive capability.” Third, “states can never be certain about other states’ intentions.” Fourth, “survival is the primary goal of great powers.” Fifth, “great powers are rational actors.”<sup>22</sup> In contrast to Waltz, Mearsheimer argues the structure of the international system causes states to “act offensively and seek hegemony.” The desire to survive prompts states to act aggressively because they cannot know the intentions of other actors.<sup>23</sup> Great powers strive to achieve regional hegemony so their survival will not be threatened. They would prefer global hegemony. But Mearsheimer says this has never happened and is not a realistic expectation, considering the military capacity that global domination would require. Regional hegemons do, however, seek to prevent peer competitors in other parts of the world from achieving hegemony because a competitor with its own regional hegemony might have the freedom to become a threat.<sup>24</sup>

Hegemons, according to Mearsheimer, are not status-quo powers. They continue to seek greater influence and advantage to improve their odds of survival in the anarchic international system. At times, hegemons will engage in offensive operations to extend their advantage. This contrasts with defensive realism’s assertion that great powers want

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21. Many of the other IR theorists make recommendations. Mearsheimer’s discussion of containment is a prediction rather than a recommendation.

22. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 31.

23. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 53-54.

24. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 236-237.

to promote the status quo. Often, the difference between offensive and defensive realism is not so clear. It may, instead, be a difference in the degree of assertiveness with which they act. Offshore balancing is a passive approach. It seeks to have others balancing against the rising power. Offensive realism is inclined to be more active. The present US situation in the Asia-Pacific is a case where the differences are real but nuanced.

The United States is a present-day hegemon, but not in the Asia-Pacific theater. The US is a hegemon in the Western Hemisphere. While the US does have territory in the Pacific, Mearsheimer says the American role there is primarily as a hegemon from another region looking to prevent the possible hegemony of a peer competitor, China. Mearsheimer claims “the optimal strategy for dealing with a rising China is containment.” Interestingly, Mearsheimer says the ideal American strategy would be offshore balancing where the US would “buck-pass” to other regional actors to contain China. However, Mearsheimer says this strategy “is not going to happen” because China’s neighbors are not sufficiently powerful to contain China without US assistance. Furthermore, the great distances that separate the other powers in Asia inhibit them from effectively containing China. For these reasons, Mearsheimer predicts that the United States will form a containment coalition to prevent China from using military might to expand its territory or to generate greater influence in Asia. He believes the ultimate aim should be an alliance structure like NATO.<sup>25</sup>

Containment is a defensive strategy so it seems inconsistent with the offensive realism moniker. It is, however, the most assertive strategy available to a rational actor who wants to ensure its own survival. China’s nuclear deterrence capability rules out an offensive attack to stem China’s pursuit of hegemony. Targeting the Chinese economy is untenable because that would harm the US economy as well. Containment is the most offensive option available within the constraints of Mearsheimer’s rational construct. It is similar to but more assertive than offshore balancing.

If the United States indeed selects a policy of containment, it would need a larger military presence in the Pacific. While offshore balancing and deep engagement are designed to avoid war, Mearsheimer’s approach seems resigned to the possibility of a Sino-American fight. He believes armed conflict between the US and China is more

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25. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 384-385.

likely than direct conflict between the US and the Soviet Union was during the Cold War because a Sino-American war would be easier to contain and less prone to the type of escalation that kept the Cold War cold. A war between NATO and the Soviet Union would have been immensely destructive and would have taken place in Europe near densely populated areas. A fight between China and the US would likely be fought over a specific hot spot or in the ocean far from dense civilian areas.<sup>26</sup>

To be clear, Mearsheimer does not recommend the US intentionally go to war with China. His predictions are more about what is likely to happen based on his model of offensive realism. In an opinion piece written for *The Australian*, Mearsheimer unequivocally stated that China will not rise peacefully. He believes that China will try to push the US out of the Asia-Pacific like the United States pushed the European powers out of the Western Hemisphere under the Monroe Doctrine.<sup>27</sup> Mearsheimer sees a parallel in twentieth century history, specifically the examples of Wilhemine Germany, Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, and the Soviet Union, to support his claim that the United States will act to defeat and dismantle aspiring regional hegemons.<sup>28</sup>

Mearsheimer is certain that the US and China will engage in a security competition during the twenty-first century. For many Americans, the natural reaction is to cast aside his warning because the predictions seem undesirable for the United States. However, his model still warrants consideration because of its anticipatory power. Even if the US does not opt for a containment strategy right away, a failure of deep engagement or offshore balancing could lead to a policy consistent with Mearsheimer's predictions. An optimal basing strategy would have the flexibility to accommodate a containment strategy if necessary. One further IR topic, the security dilemma, will be addressed before synthesizing the grand-strategic alternatives.

### **The Security Dilemma**

The security dilemma is a common term referring to an enduring problem. Robert Jervis succinctly describes the security dilemma: "Many of the means by which a state

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26. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 399.

27. John J. Mearsheimer, "The Rise of China Will Not Be Peaceful At All," *The Australian*, 18 November 2005, <http://mearsheimer.uchicago.edu/pdfs/P0014.pdf>.

28. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 367.

tries to increase its security decrease the security of others.”<sup>29</sup> The emergence of the current security dilemma in the Asia-Pacific is consistent with this description. If China builds up its military forces in an effort to increase its security, the United States suspects aggressive intentions. Likewise, if the US opens new bases in the Pacific or increases the forces stationed there to protect its interests, China will probably view those actions as directly encroaching on its security.

Jervis developed a model with four quadrants or “worlds” to evaluate the stability of a security dilemma. The quadrants are defined by two variables: (1) offense-defense balance and (2) offense-defense differentiation. The first variable, offense-defense balance simply describes which side has the advantage. Jervis states that technology and geography are the primary determinants of advantage. The second variable, offense-defense differentiation, describes the degree to which offensive and defensive weapons can be differentiated from one another.<sup>30</sup> Figure 15 shows Jervis’s “four world” model. The horizontal axis depicts offense-defense balance and the vertical axis shows offense-defense differentiation. The upper left quadrant, or first world, is the most dangerous scenario because offense is not distinguishable from defense and offense has the advantage. Scenarios that fit into this world have the most uncertainty and the offensive advantage creates an incentive to be the first to strike. In many respects, states cannot control the world in which they operate. However, force-posture decisions made by the United States can affect which theoretical world the real Asia-Pacific theater most resembles. If the US is a status-quo power, it should make an effort to present a posture in which defensive weapons are distinguishable from offensive ones. If possible, the United States should also use geography and technology to create an advantage for the defense.<sup>31</sup>

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29. Robert Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma,” in *The Use of Force: Military Power and International Politics*, ed. Robert J. Art and Kenneth N. Waltz, 7th Edition (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 46.

30. Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma,” 46-56.

31. Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma,” 65.

	OFFENSE HAS THE ADVANTAGE	DEFENSE HAS THE ADVANTAGE
OFFENSIVE POSTURE NOT DISTINGUISHABLE FROM DEFENSIVE ONE	1 Doubly dangerous	2 Security dilemma, but security requirements may be compatible.
OFFENSIVE POSTURE DISTINGUISHABLE FROM DEFENSIVE ONE	3 No security dilemma, but aggression possible. Status-quo states can follow different policy than aggressors. Warning given.	4 Doubly stable

**Figure 15. Jervis's "Four World" Model of the Security Dilemma.**

Source: Reprinted from Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma." In *The Use of Force: Military Power and International Politics*, edited by Robert J. Art and Kenneth N. Waltz, 7th Edition., 44–68. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009.

One further observation from Jervis deserves attention. He notes that "neither naval forces nor tactical air forces can be readily classified in [offensive or defensive] terms."<sup>32</sup> Implicit in this statement is that bombers, what Jervis might call *strategic* air forces, are inherently offensive. Tactical air forces are still hard to differentiate today but perhaps less so than in 1978 when Jervis wrote. Fourth generation fighters, such as F-15s and F-16s, would present a less provocative capability than stealthy, fifth-generation ones, like F-22s and F-35s, which can penetrate enemy air defenses.

### Grand Strategy Synthesis

Each of the international relations theories previously detailed possesses significant explanatory power; but, as Mearsheimer observes, the world is "remarkably complicated" and "every theory confronts cases that contradict its main predictions."<sup>33</sup> A grand strategist compelled to follow the prescription of only one IR theory would struggle to make it fit the entire Asia-Pacific theory. Fortunately for the strategist, theories should not be considered prescriptive. As Clausewitz observed, theories should

32. Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," 60.

33. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 411.



be used to educate the mind of leaders.<sup>34</sup> Regional diversity, geographic expansiveness, and fiscal limitations may combine to pressure the United States to pursue a hybrid strategy in the Asia-Pacific. The present strategy of deep engagement will continue with America's closest partners in the region, Australia, Japan, and South Korea. Although it has not been officially labeled as such—and probably never will be—the US strategy for South and Southeast Asia is already more consistent with offshore balancing than the publicly professed deep engagement strategy. Evidence of offshore balancing as the current policy is apparent in the absence of a significant US presence in South or Southeast Asia. The realities of fiscal limitations and the security dilemma inhibit true deep engagement in these areas.

Some may argue a hybrid strategy is not appropriate within a single geographic combatant command. But the boundaries of PACOM are artificial. Administrative convenience is not a sufficient reason to force a single theoretical philosophy to animate strategy for the entire Asia-Pacific region. The PACOM AOR covers over 52 percent of the earth's surface and contains over half the world's population.<sup>35</sup> The more rational approach is to recognize that a single theory may not work across such a broad theater. Thus, a synthesis is necessary.

Deep engagement will most likely remain the grand strategy in Northeast Asia and Australia. As noted earlier, military presence provides the foundation of assurance and deterrence necessary to build and maintain a system of institutions that provide predictability and stability. The military presence in Japan, South Korea, and Australia provides assurance to three of America's largest trading partners and long-time allies. Figure 16, reprised from Chapter 2, depicts their economic importance to the United States. US forces stationed in South Korea and Japan also provide the valuable benefit of preventing development of an undesirable security dilemma between those two nations

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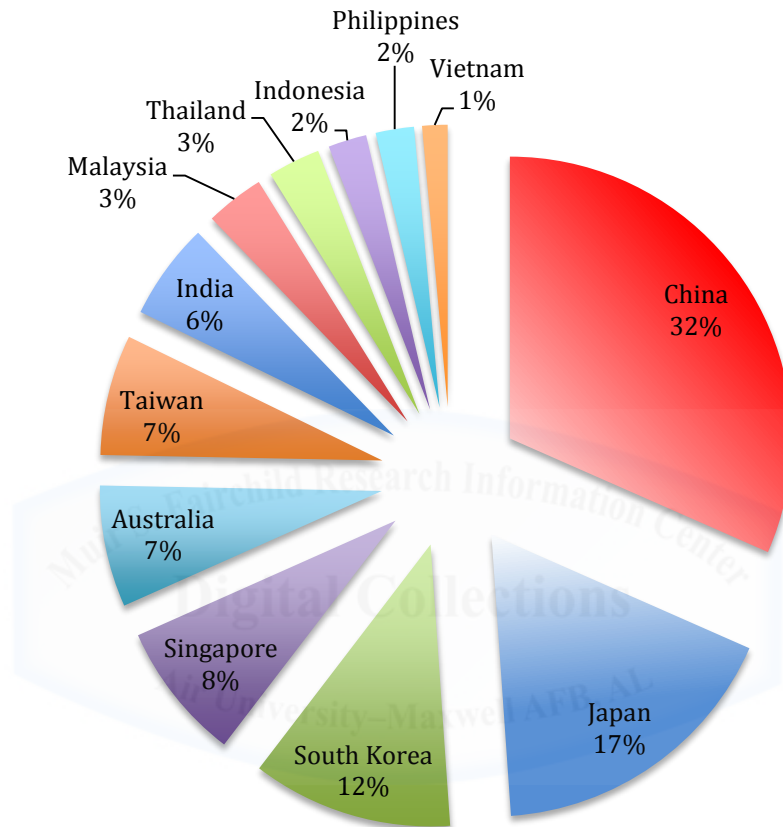
34. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War, Indexed Edition*, trans. Michael Eliot Howard and Peter Paret, Reprint edition (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), 146-147.

35. Samuel J. Locklear, "Speech at the Surface Navy Association Conference," (Speech, Surface Navy Association Conference, 17 January 2014). <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/SpeechesTestimony/tabid/6706/Article/565151/speech-at-the-surface-navy-association-conference.aspx>.



because, despite their separate bilateral ties to the United States, they still harbor noteworthy mutual antipathies.<sup>36</sup>

## US Exports to the Asia-Pacific



**Figure 16. US Exports to the Asia-Pacific.**

Source: Author constructed chart with data from US Census Bureau.

Having military forces concentrated in Northeast Asia, Australia, and US Pacific territories are not *ideal* for providing the assurance and deterrence necessary to sustain the broad Western-based system of institutions or to prevent the emergence of a rival system of institutions elsewhere in the theater. However, this posture is less likely to exacerbate the Sino-American security dilemma than an alternative with a larger amount of US forces based closer to China's borders. When combined with US economic and

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36. "How to Fix the Japan-South Korea Relationship," *The Diplomat*, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/04/how-to-fix-the-japan-south-korea-relationship/> (accessed 24 April 2015).

diplomatic influence, the Western institutional order may well remain sufficiently expansive and powerful to convince Chinese leaders to integrate peacefully into it.

Layne accurately predicted the economic trends that have made it difficult for the United States to increase its presence in Asia in response to China's growing military and economic power. Furthermore, America remains committed in Europe and the Middle East and the DOD is on a sequestration-limited budget. As realists will point out, resources do not always allow for *ideal* solutions. A greater troop presence in South or Southeast Asia has non-budgetary disadvantages as well. A small increase would be inflammatory without providing sufficient forces to provide a real enhancement to regional security. An adequate posture for a US-led containment strategy would require a large increase in force presence. This would almost certainly lead to an arms race between the US and China and a tangible elevation of the security dilemma. Furthermore, there are no indications that China has expansionist aspirations in South or Southeast Asia except in the South China Sea. In Southeast Asia, the US only needs—and can only afford—to posture its force for deterrence in the South China Sea. By outlasting France, the US, and China during the twentieth century, Vietnam demonstrated that the smaller powers in that region are capable of defending their own territory. Similarly, India's nuclear capability and conventional force is capable of providing for its own defense, especially with US support as an offshore balancer.

### **Summary**

The rise of China identified in Chapter 1 has not been unexpected. The arguments for deep engagement, offshore balancing, and containment have been developed for some time. Each has different strengths. Deep engagement provides a pathway to accommodate China's rise and incorporate it into the Western free market system of institutions. It also provides significant assurance to allies and deterrence to counter Chinese or North Korean aggression. Offshore balancing is less expensive because it shifts more of the burden to regional partners whose security is directly threatened. It also allows the United States to avoid an undesirable conflict that a weaker ally might pull it into under a containment or deep engagement strategy. Containment is most beneficial when war appears highly certain. A heavy forward presence might provide the necessary deterrent to prevent such a war. If deterrence failed, the heavy

presence would be helpful in the initial stages of conflict. Despite these benefits, the cost of a containment strategy are probably too prohibitive to maintain unless acts of aggression appear to be just over the horizon.

From the US grand strategy perspective, the optimal Asia-Pacific force posture would have maximum flexibility to flow between grand strategy alternatives as conditions dictate. The posture would also minimize the risk of war due to an exacerbated security dilemma, an objective common to all three IR perspectives. The other priorities for force posture vary according to the strategy in use. Chapter 3 integrates the IR theories with PACOM's theater military strategy to create a construct for evaluating the basing alternatives presented in Chapter 4. The construct scores each alternative according to its ability to support the distinct priorities of the disparate grand strategies.



## **Chapter 3**

### **Pacific Military Strategy and the Posture Analysis Construct**

Force posture is a function of military strategy, which supports and enables grand strategy. This chapter presents a construct for evaluating future posture alternatives according to how well they support American military strategy and grand strategy in the Asia-Pacific. The construct incorporates a synthesis of considerations from three source types: strategic military guidance, academic analyses, and a theater-specific warfighting strategy original to this thesis.

The first section, “Pacific Military Strategy,” describes region-specific priorities expressed in strategic guidance from the DOD, USPACOM, and PACAF. The majority of the criteria presented later in the chapter originate from this guidance. The second section, “Additional Military-Strategic Considerations,” summarizes two RAND studies and a warfighting concept called Counter-Denial, Distant Interdiction (CDDI). The RAND studies fill in gaps in the military guidance and provide useful terminology for describing specific relationships and considerations. CDDI is an alternative military strategy intended to achieve strategic goals in low-to-mid spectrum conflicts while reducing potential for escalation.

The third section offers a comprehensive analytical tool called the Posture Analysis Construct (PAC) for assessing force posture alternatives. PAC is a mathematical framework that gives structure and rigor to the art of strategy. The tool establishes six theater posture objectives (TPOs) drawn from the sources referred to in the first two sections of this chapter. Posture alternatives receive raw scores according to how well they support the TPOs. The construct also includes a weighting system that adjusts the relative emphasis of TPOs to produce a set of PAC scores linked to four grand-strategic categories. The construct also includes statistical data that can be used to compare the flexibility of various alternatives.

**Table 1. Theater Posture Objectives**

Theater Posture Objectives	
Objectives	Source(s)
1. Build Strong Relationships	PACOM Strategy & PACOM Posture Plan
2. Maintain an Assured Presence	PACOM Strategy & PACOM Posture Plan
3. Communicate USPACOM Intent and Resolve to Safeguard US Interests	PACOM Strategy & PACOM Posture Plan
4. Ensure Readiness to Fight and Win	PACOM Strategy
5. Attenuate US-China Security Dilemma	Chapter 2. "Security Dilemma" Section
6. Operate within a Realistic Budget	Chapter 1. "Budget Constraints" Section

Source: Author's Original Work.

Table 1 provides a preview of the theater posture objectives established by the PAC. This preview is a useful reference for subsequent sections that explain why these TPOs have been established.

### **Pacific Military Strategy**

The following analysis draws on the best available unclassified sources to describe the posture-related guidance of the current US military strategy for the Asia-Pacific. There are two sources from USPACOM, one source from PACAF, and a DOD warfighting concept designed for theaters facing sophisticated threats. Together, these sources comprise the bulk of considerations woven into the Posture Analysis Construct.

#### **USPACOM Strategy**

US Pacific Command's publicly released strategy opens up with a statement from Admiral Samuel Locklear, the USPACOM commander, asserting America's "desired end state is that the Asia-Pacific is secure and prosperous, underpinned by US leadership and a rules based international order."<sup>1</sup> The statement also establishes three lines of effort (LOEs) pursuant to the US goals for the region: (1) "strengthen alliances and partnerships," (2) "maintain an assured presence in the region," and (3) "effectively communicate our intent and resolve to safeguard US national interests." These LOEs appear repeatedly in PACOM publications describing how the American military supports the nation's grand-strategic goals. The PACOM strategy also presents another major consideration for posture planning, "Readiness to Fight and Win."<sup>2</sup>

1. USPACOM, "USPACOM Strategy," <http://www.pacom.mil/AboutUSPACOM/USPACOMStrategy.aspx> (29 January 2015).

2. USPACOM, "USPACOM Strategy."

Adm Locklear's guidance to "strengthen alliances and partnerships" is frequently articulated as "Build Strong Relationships." This variation is the heading of a section of PACOM's strategy addressing cooperation with regional partners. PACOM's pursuit of strong relationships is to be expected. They are desirable under all three of the grand-strategic alternatives outlined in Chapter 2. PACOM contends that strong relationships "advance common interests and address shared threats." One can assume the common interests include the goal of a secure, prosperous region and a rules-based order making that possible. The document does not specifically describe the perceived threats, but one can infer them as being China, North Korea, weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, and natural disasters based on the five paragraphs devoted to those specific subjects.<sup>3</sup> This list of shared threats enables varying levels of cooperation with almost every member of the region. Even in a competitive environment, China and the US could cooperate to respond to natural disasters. Additional military strategy documents provide more details about the posture considerations associated with building strong partnerships.

The "Assured Presence" line of effort is intended to provide tangible evidence of US commitment to American allies. The PACOM strategy does not provide an in-depth description of the "assured presence" effort. However, five particulars are germane to Air Force posture in the Pacific. First, presence facilitates the "protection of critical defense infrastructure." Peacetime basing structure is the foundation of a potential crisis buildup. The defense of avenues into the theater is a vital peacetime consideration. Second, presence enables bilateral and multilateral training that builds trust and strengthens cooperative capabilities. In this sense, presence and strong relationships are complementary pursuits. The third consideration is often overlooked. The PACOM strategy asserts forces from inside *and outside* the theater assurance provide assurance. At times, theater presence is necessary to facilitate external forces supporting the PACOM mission. Some of the forces from outside the theater, such as the B-2 bomber, require support from aerial-refueling aircraft operating from bases inside the theater. The fourth assured presence area endorses "distributed" force posture. A distributed posture aides power projection and can improve resiliency in certain threat situations. The fifth and final topic is PACOM's assertion that *forward* presence is key to "responding

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3. USPACOM, "USPACOM Strategy."

quickly to contingencies and conveying our resolve.”<sup>4</sup> Although PACOM does not specify areas where forward presence is desirable, such presence should provide reach to the potential conflict areas described in Chapter 1.

While PACOM oriented its first and second lines of effort toward allies and partners, the third line of effort, “Effectively Communicate USPACOM Intent and Resolve,” focuses directly on potential threats.<sup>5</sup> Adm Locklear’s intent is clear. The PACOM commander considers deterrence a major priority. The basic components of deterrence are capability and will. Force posture is one way to convey capability. Strategic messaging and information operations are important to this objective, but actions speak louder than words. A squadron of B-2 bombers at Andersen AFB, Guam, or of F-22 fighters at Kadena AB, Japan, telegraphs a message of resolve in a tangible way unachievable by rhetoric. The resiliency with which to withstand attacks and the ability to project power are desirable attributes of force posture that contribute noticeably to deterrence.

Although PACOM’s strategy does not group “Readiness to Fight and Win” with the other three lines of effort, it does state “USPACOM is first and foremost a war fighting command.”<sup>6</sup> The peaceful use of force provides stability and deterrence, but military organizations must remain vigilant to ensure they are prepared for the ultimate challenge—armed conflict. If deterrence fails, pre-war force posture plays a major role in the outcome of the opening rounds.

#### **Draft 2015 USPACOM Posture Plan**

The USPACOM strategy is unclassified and intended for public consumption, but the USPACOM Posture Plan is a classified document intended for internal US government use.<sup>7</sup> Unclassified passages within the Draft Theater Posture Plan underscore the three lines of effort found in Admiral Locklear’s opening statement in the PACOM strategy. “Build Strong Partners,” “Assured Presence,” and “Effectively

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4. USPACOM, “USPACOM Strategy.”

5. USPACOM, “USPACOM Strategy.”

6. USPACOM, “USPACOM Strategy.”

7. The author was given access to several unclassified portions of this document. Every reference to the Draft 2015 USPACOM Posture Plan herein is from a paragraph designated unclassified. Additionally, references include only paragraph numbers because the page numbers were not available in the draft version.



Communicate USPACOM Intent and Resolve” again receive conspicuous emphasis with early paragraphs dedicated to expounding their importance.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the “Posture Strategy” section begins with the following statement, “USPACOM will posture our forces, footprints and agreements in a manner that will effectively communicate our intent and resolve to safeguard US national interests, strengthen alliances and partnerships, maintain an assured presence in the region, prevent conflict and, if necessary, respond rapidly and effectively across the full range of military operations.”<sup>9</sup> This consistency of emphasis across key USPACOM documents is a clear indication that the first four theater posture objectives of the PAC are directly relevant to the extant priorities of American military leadership in theater.

The Draft Posture Plan also highlights three other areas of emphasis specific to posture in the Asia-Pacific: geographic distribution, operational resilience, and political sustainability. Geographic distribution is important because of the “tyranny of distance” that makes it difficult for forces in one part of the theater to respond rapidly to crises in other parts of the theater. The need for operational resilience arises from the growing missile threat posed by the PRC and the DPRK.<sup>10</sup> Although not specifically mentioned in the Posture Plan, geographic distribution also contributes to operational resilience by creating more distributed operational bases for the enemy to attack. Finally, political sustainability is an important consideration in places such as the Philippines, where public sentiment has led previous administrations to ask US forces to leave.

### **Pacific Air Forces Command Strategy**

Like the USPACOM Strategy, the PACAF Command Strategy is unclassified. As would be expected, the PACAF strategy nests within the guidance of USPACOM. However, General Herbert “Hawk” Carlisle, the previous commander of PACAF and approving official for the current strategy, chose not to incorporate the PACOM lines of effort precisely within the PACAF strategy. This is entirely understandable because as a subordinate component to PACOM, PACAF has both a narrower focus and more specific

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8. USPACOM, “Draft 2015 USPACOM Theater Posture Plan,” (SECRET) Information cited is unclassified, paragraph 2.

9. USPACOM, “Draft 2015 USPACOM Theater Posture Plan,” paragraph 4.

10. USPACOM, “Draft 2015 USPACOM Theater Posture Plan,” paragraph 4.

concerns. Thus, PACAF uses five lines of operation.<sup>11</sup> Four of these are applicable to posture planning. The following paragraphs examine the lines of operation in roughly their order of priority with regard to force-posture considerations.

First, General Carlisle asserts “my top priority is building a resilient Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD) for the region.”<sup>12</sup> PACAF calls for a mix of active and passive defenses to survive strikes, supplemented by attack operations to disarm aggressors.<sup>13</sup> A resilient IAMD capability is important to at least three theater posture objectives: assured presence, communication of deterrence, and readiness to fight and win.

The second pertinent PACAF line of operation is “Power Projection.”<sup>14</sup> Power projection is vital to deterrence in two ways. First, the ability to project power into contested areas enables deterrence by denial if it causes a potential aggressor to assess that it cannot achieve its goals with military force. Second, power projection can provide deterrence through threatened retaliation if can hold at risk an adversary’s vital interests. The ability to project power is also important to ensuring readiness to fight and win.

“Agile, Flexible Command and Control (C2)” is the third PACAF line of operation related to force posture.<sup>15</sup> Posture arrangements may either complicate or simplify C2 efforts. The simplest posture from a C2 perspective might be one giant base in the Pacific serving as a home for the headquarters as well as all combat and support forces. While communication and coordination would be more efficient with such a construct, there would be many disadvantages—especially if power projection became necessary. Clearly, a single US base in the Pacific is not a realistic alternative in the near future. Nevertheless, any discussion of concentration and dispersal of forces in the Pacific should include consideration about the consequences for C2 effectiveness. The requirement for effective command and control also supports the Theater Posture Objective #4, “Ensuring Readiness to Fight and Win.”

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11. Herbert J. Carlisle, “Pacific Air Forces Command Strategy: Projecting Airpower in the Pacific” <http://www.pacaf.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-130611-122.pdf>, 2.

12. Carlisle, “Pacific Air Forces Command Strategy,” 2.

13. Carlisle, “Pacific Air Forces Command Strategy,” 10.

14. Carlisle, “Pacific Air Forces Command Strategy,” 10.

15. Carlisle, “Pacific Air Forces Command Strategy,” 10.

The fourth PACAF line of operation relevant to force posture is “Theater Security Cooperation (TSC).”<sup>16</sup> This line of operation directly supports the PACOM endeavor to “Build Strong Relationships.”<sup>17</sup> Exercises and engagement activities are the primary methods used to pursue TSC.<sup>18</sup> A forward, distributed force posture enables TSC events to happen regularly because partner air forces can conduct combined operations with the USAF at lower cost than if they had to travel significant distances. Such frequent interaction fosters mutual trust and understanding.

### **Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC)**

In January 2010 the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), General Martin Dempsey, published a document called *Joint Operational Access Concept* (JOAC), which described his vision for how US forces would operate in an Anti-Access / Area-Denial (A2/AD) environment. This publication focuses on force employment rather than force posture. It does, however, provide a valuable list of capabilities that will be required for combat operations in a sophisticated threat environment. When possible, a steady-state force posture should incorporate these capabilities to ensure readiness to fight and win.

Before exploring JOAC’s list of required capabilities, A2/AD should be defined. The acronym A2/AD groups separate but similar concepts. According to the JOAC, anti-access actions and capabilities are “usually long-range, designed to prevent an opposing force from entering an operational area.” Area-denial includes “actions and capabilities, usually of shorter range, designed not to keep an opposing force out, but to limit its freedom of action within the operational area.”<sup>19</sup> The A2/AD construct is almost always used to describe the capabilities of potential adversaries, usually China and Iran. A2/AD capabilities are a major concern for operations in the Pacific. China’s missile threat to American air bases is the primary capability that jeopardizes US Air Force access to the Pacific. Furthermore, the proliferation of sophisticated surface-to-air missiles SAMs in the Pacific theater menaces air actions within operational areas.

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16. Carlisle, “Pacific Air Forces Command Strategy,” 10.

17. USPACOM, “Draft 2015 USPACOM Theater Posture Plan,” paragraph 2.

18. Carlisle, “Pacific Air Forces Command Strategy,” 10.

19. Martin E. Dempsey, “Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC)” (Department of Defense, January 17, 2012), 6.

The JOAC is a US response to A2/AD. The central concept of the approach is known as cross-domain synergy.<sup>20</sup> While the idea is to exploit the effects of joint cooperation, certain core airpower functions can be identified from the list of required capabilities. The first is “to locate, target, and suppress or neutralize hostile [A2/AD] capabilities in complex terrain with the necessary range, precision, responsiveness, and reversible and permanent effects while limiting collateral damage.” While there are other ways to accomplish this mission, air strikes are among the most likely. When air provides this JOAC capability, it normally involves three subordinate capabilities to achieve the goal: ISR, precision strike, and air refueling. The second JOAC requirement is “the ability to interdict enemy forces and materiel deploying to an operational area.”<sup>21</sup> Air interdiction, a core Air Force mission, is clearly part of that construct. Interdiction against air and land targets has been the focus. USAF units are neither fully equipped nor well trained for the air interdiction of maritime targets. Yet, the JOAC construct may require land-based airpower to provide AIMT capability in the Asia-Pacific region, an AOR dominated by water.

### **Additional Military-Strategic Considerations**

Military sources by themselves do not encompass all the considerations affecting posture decisions. The security dilemma described Chapter 3 is one example of a consideration that appears unrepresented in current, unclassified military guidance. Two studies from RAND Corporation provide further insight into posture considerations. This section will also present an original strategic concept called Counter Denial/Distant Interdiction. The ideas provided by RAND and the CDDI concept round out the robust considerations provided by the USPACOM and PACAF guidance.

### **“The Posture Triangle”**

Stacie Pettyjohn and Alan Vick of the RAND corporation developed “The Posture Triangle” as a framework for USAF global presence. The core of their argument presents three posture requirements for US power projection: (1) “Maintain security ties to closest partners and key regions.” (2) “Conduct effective operations.” (3) “Sustain global military activities.” The authors further assert that the US engages in three classes of

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20. Dempsey, “JOAC,” Forward.

21. Dempsey, “JOAC,” 34.

activities in pursuit of the above requirements: (1) “Create strategic anchors.” (2) “Identify and develop [forward operating locations] FOLs.” (3) “Maintain support links.”<sup>22</sup> Each of the activities directly correlates to a posture requirement as depicted in figure 17.

	Strategic Anchors	FOLs	Support Links
Maintain security ties to closest partners and regions	X		
Conduct effective operations		X	
Sustain global military activities			X

**Figure 17. Overseas Military Requirements and Supporting Activities.**

Source: Stacie Pettyjohn and Alan Vick, “The Posture Triangle.” RAND Corporation, 2013

The term *strategic anchor* is useful in posture discussions. The US considers regional actors to be strategic anchors if they meet two criteria. First, they have a special relationship with the United States. Second, they have hosted an enduring US military presence.<sup>23</sup> Strategic anchors can be divided into two types. Top tier strategic anchors are called *enduring partners*. These are the closest American security partners. Pettyjohn and Vick identify seven globally, three of which are in the Asia-Pacific—Australia, South Korea, and Japan.<sup>24</sup> *Mutual Defense Partners* exist where the relationship is “built on a shared threat perception.” This type of relationship can be long-term as well, but only if both parties remain committed to countering the mutual threat.<sup>25</sup>

Forward operating locations are often required to provide the necessary range for power projection. Strategic anchor locations can serve as FOLs, but they are not always close enough to the potential conflict areas. Pettyjohn and Vick contend the maximum range from operating areas varies, but 1500 nautical miles works for most platforms. The report emphasizes “the USAF need not maintain a presence or have routine peacetime access to contingency FOLs. Indeed, during major contingencies the USAF regularly

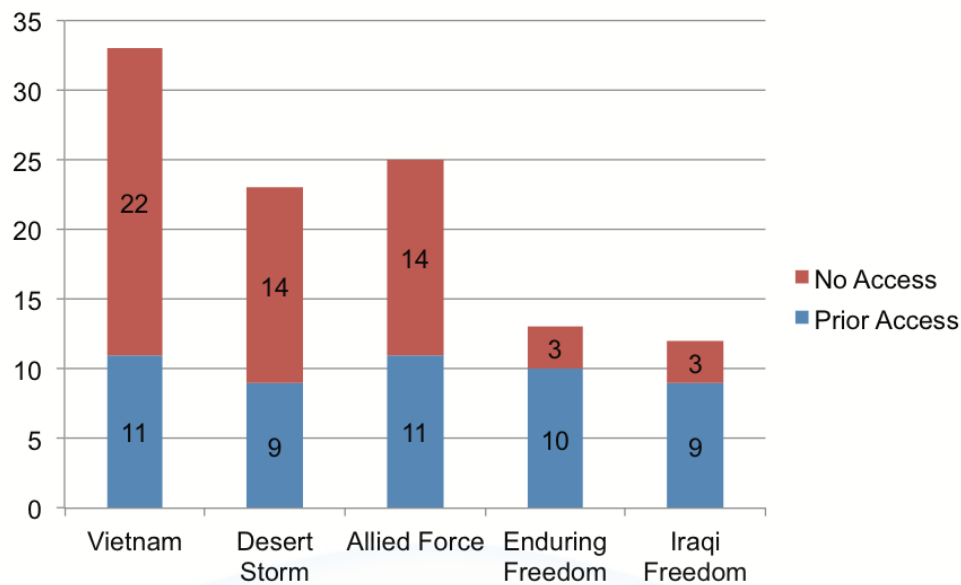
22. Stacie L. Pettyjohn and Alan J. Vick, *The Posture Triangle* (RAND Corporation, 2013), [http://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR402.html](http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR402.html), 11-12.

23. Pettyjohn and Vick, *The Posture Triangle*, 13.

24. Pettyjohn and Vick, *The Posture Triangle*, 18.

25. Pettyjohn and Vick, *The Posture Triangle*, xv.

operates out of FOLs where it has neither.”<sup>26</sup> The authors support this assertion with a graphic of the airfields used during five major combat operations.



**Figure 18. Airfields Used by the USAF during Five Major Combat Operations.**

Source: Stacie Pettyjohn and Alan Vick, “The Posture Triangle.” RAND Corporation, 2013.

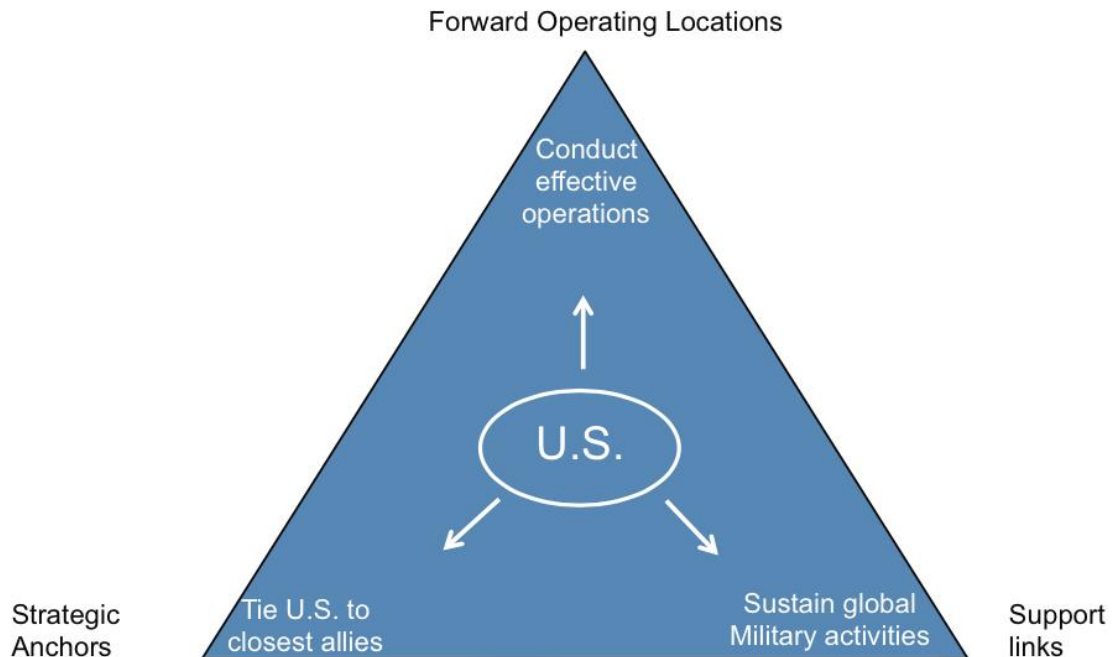
Support links are the locations necessary to enable sustainment activities. From the Air Force perspective, they are en route airfields. The US positions support links to provide refueling operations for fighter deployments and redundant routes across oceans for airlift operations. The Pacific has two transoceanic routes, one in the north and one in the south. The northern route uses Alaska and Japan, while the southern route utilizes Hawaii and Guam.<sup>27</sup>

The “Posture Triangle” gets its name from a model that integrates the posture requirements and their associated activities. The triangle links posture decisions to core national objectives and provides an explanatory aid to communicate the necessity basing actions. The Posture Analysis Construct presented later in this chapter incorporates terminology and relationships identified by Pettyjohn and Vick.

26. Pettyjohn and Vick, *The Posture Triangle*, 22.

27. Pettyjohn and Vick, *The Posture Triangle*, 30-31.





**Figure 19. The Posture Triangle.**

Source: Stacie Pettyjohn and Alan Vick, “The Posture Triangle.” RAND Corporation, 2013

### “A Cost Analysis of the US Air Force Overseas Posture”

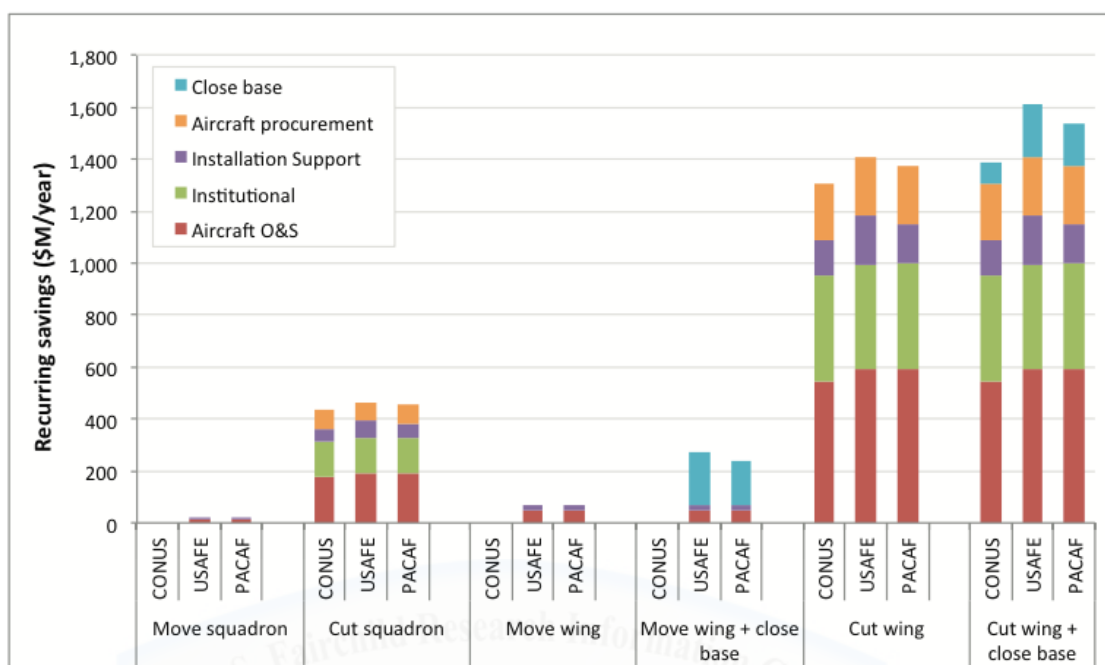
The cost of overseas basing is one of the primary reasons offshore balancers want to bring home forces that are currently stationed overseas. In “A Cost Analysis of the US Air Force Overseas Posture,” RAND researchers present data suggesting “the primary risk in the presence debate is making choices that produce relatively modest savings, but with potentially enormous strategic and fiscal consequences.”<sup>28</sup> The evidence suggests simply moving forces back to the continental United States (CONUS) provides minimal savings. Closing all overseas bases in the Pacific and moving the forces to the homeland would save less than one percent of the Air Force’s annual Total Obligation Authority (TOA).<sup>29</sup> The bulk of costs at overseas bases are associated with the maintenance, operation, and support of flying squadrons, which would continue to occur at CONUS bases. Significant savings only take place when forces are cut from the Air Force’s

28. Patrick Mills et al., *A Cost Analysis of the U.S. Air Force Overseas Posture: Informing Strategic Choices* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2013), 29.

29. Mills et al., *A Cost Analysis of the U.S. Air Force Overseas Posture*, 28.



overall structure. Figure 20 demonstrates this data for a hypothetical F-16 squadron (24 aircraft) and wing (72 aircraft.)



**Figure 20. Recurring Savings for Posture Policy Options.**

Source: Patrick Mills, et al. "A Cost Analysis of the US Air Force Overseas Posture: Informing Strategic Choices." RAND Corporation, 2013.

Adjustments to the overall force structure of the USAF are beyond the scope of this paper. But if force-structure changes were to be enacted, they would in all probability decrease the confidence that PACOM could support American military strategy at the existing level.

### Counter-Denial / Distant Interdiction

The major thrust of this thesis is not to articulate a new strategy for Asia-Pacific contingencies. There is, however, a gap in the available material about strategy options for situations of low-to-moderate intensity. Strategies for potential conflict with China are frequently based on the presumption that America will attack the Chinese mainland. In the author's opinion, such options entail too much risk for all but the most dire circumstances. Such risk comes in two forms. First, China's area-denial capabilities would likely lead to significant and perhaps unacceptable US losses. Second, attacks on mainland China carry significant escalation risk. In low-to-moderate intensity situations, the National Command Authority (NCA) is more likely to prefer options that allow

escalation to be contained. Counter-Denial, Distant Interdiction is an option that may satisfy this desire. Thus, the Posture Analysis Construct favorably scores alternatives that provide the capabilities necessary for implementing a CDDI strategy. The following paragraphs present the basic tenets of that strategy.

CDDI is a hybrid strategy that manipulates the dual levers of denial and punishment. Each lever focuses on a different variable in the adversaries cost-benefit analysis. The punishment lever increases the costs while the denial lever inhibits the benefits. The intent is to persuade a potential adversary to abandon its aggressive aspirations. The counter-denial portion seeks to impose the same type of penalties the adversary intends to impose on the US. An adversary that tries to deny American freedom of action in a disputed area will be denied something of equal or greater value by the US. This concept is particularly well suited to three of the four potential conflict areas in the Asia-Pacific because water separates the claimants from the disputed territories. Counter-denial requires the ability to detect and engage ships and aircraft in and approaching contested areas. It might also require the ability to mine enemy harbors. Denying an adversary the ability to achieve its goals is the first component of the strategy.

The second component of the strategy is punishment in the form of distant interdiction that blocks the supply of critical imports. For example, China's critical imports are iron ore and oil. Distant interdiction should take place outside of the contested area and the adversary's A2/AD zone. Such an operation would probably involve diverting ships rather than sinking them, but the USAF could still provide much needed maritime air support (MAS) because US Navy vessels would necessarily be spread at great distances. Many of the areas of operation could be outside the range of the nearest carrier action group. In these situations, USAF aircraft could aid in the identification of suspect ships. The desired Air Force capabilities for a CDDI strategy include aerial refueling, AIMT, MAS, defensive and offensive counter-air, and ISR.

CDDI has several advantageous features. First, it has a lower potential for escalation than a strategy involving mainland strikes. Second, if the aggressor refuses to acquiesce to American demands, distant interdiction pulls the aggressor away from its comfort zone within the A2/AD envelope. In this sense, it is a strategic kind of judo that

pulls the enemy off balance and uses its weight to induce its demise. For the foreseeable future, any fight that takes place on the open seas will remain advantageous to the United States. Even if CDDI fails to achieve fully the desired results, a more risky and aggressive strategy could subsequently be pursued without significant lingering ill effects from CDDI.

The RAND Corporation report cited above and the CDDI strategy represent worthwhile additions to the guidelines provided by US strategy and posture documents. The next step is shaping those guidelines and additions into a useful format.

### **Posture Analysis Construct**

Helmuth von Moltke observed, “Strategy is a system of expedients. It is more than a discipline; it is the transfer of knowledge to practical life.”<sup>30</sup> In the spirit of von Molke’s endorsement of a systematic approach toward strategy, the remainder of this chapter presents a system to transfer the concepts of strategic guidance and academic research into a detailed but useful process. Such a process will allow us to evaluate various posture alternatives using a scoring system forged from USPACOM guidance, financial necessity, relevant academic research, and classic international relations theory. The Posture Analysis Construct is based on expanded version of the theater posture objectives previously noted. The following paragraphs step through the PAC system by describing its TPOs, its grand-strategic weighting system, and its methods of analyzing flexibility.

### **Theater Posture Objectives**

The PAC system begins with the selection of a posture alternative to score. The system was designed to score theater-wide posture alternatives based on their comparative value and flexibility. The PAC will be used in this manner in Chapter 4. If desired, the PAC can also compare more finite alternatives such as the addition of a new missile defense system or the repositioning of a bomber squadron based on how much theater-wide value each option provides.

Alternatives are scored by how well they achieve the six previously listed theater posture objectives. Because the objectives are broad, the PAC includes supporting goals

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30. Helmuth von Moltke, *Moltke on the Art of War: Selected Writings*, ed. Daniel Hughes (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1995), 47.

to aid in scoring. The next six tables present the TPOs and their supporting goals, as well as the sources of those goals. Most of the supporting goals have been previously addressed.

**Table 2. Theater Posture Objective #1: Build Strong Relationships**

Theater Posture Objective #1	Build Strong Relationships	
	Source(s): PACOM Strategy & PACOM Posture Plan	
Supporting Goals	Source(s)	
Address Shared Threats	PACOM Strategy, PACOM Posture Plan, & "Posture Triangle"	
Secure Access to the Region	PACOM Posture Plan	
Facilitate Freedom of Movement	PACOM Posture Plan	
Pre-arrange for Geographic Distribution	PACOM Posture Plan	
Enable Theater Security Cooperation	PACAF Strategy	
Advance Common Interests	PACOM Strategy & PACOM Posture Plan	
IAMD Passive Defense	PACAF Strategy	
Provide Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief	PACOM Strategy & PACOM Posture Plan	
Keep allies/partners committed to Western Institutional Regime	Chapter 2, "Deep Engagement" Section	

Source: Author's Original Work.

"Build Strong Relationships" is taken directly from PACOM guidance. This line of effort ties in with the goals of maintaining strategic anchors and securing forward operating locations (FOLs) for potential contingency operations. Regional partners help secure access to the region and lay the groundwork for geographic distribution should deterrence fail.

**Table 3. Theater Posture Objective #2. Maintain an Assured Presence**

Theater Posture Objective #2	Maintain an Assured Presence	
	Source(s): PACOM Strategy & PACOM Posture Plan	
Supporting Goals	Source(s)	
Maintain Political Sustainability of Strategic Anchor Network	PACOM Strategy, PACOM Posture Plan, & "Posture Triangle"	
Ensure Protection of Critical Defense Infrastructure	PACOM Strategy	
Facilitate Bilateral and Multilateral Theater Security Cooperation (TSC)	PACAF Strategy	
Resiliency/ IAMD	PACAF Strategy	
Active Defense	PACAF Strategy	
Passive Defense	PACAF Strategy	
Geographic Distribution	PACOM Strategy	
Enable Peacetime Sustainment	"Posture Triangle"	
Use Forces from Inside and Outside the Region to Signal to Partners	PACOM Strategy & PACOM Posture Plan	
Keep allies and partners committed to Western Institutional Regime	Chapter 2, "Deep Engagement" Section	

Source: Author's Original Work.

Theater Posture Objective #2, "Maintain an Assured Presence," also comes directly from the PACOM strategy. The focus of this TPO is the strategic anchor network. Assured presence shows American commitment in order to keep allies loyal to the US and to the broader Western institutional regime. Presence also facilitates other important trust-building operations such as exercises and engagement activities that fall

under the umbrella of theater security cooperation. Resilience is also a major consideration for assured presence. Allies must believe the US forces present in their country can survive strikes from a potential enemy, or the assurance will be diluted. Because resilience is important to multiple PACOM lines of effort, it is a supporting goal for more than one TPO. This is an acceptable arrangement because a valid score of an alternative's value to the theater should account for all the lines of effort it supports or fails to support.

**Table 4. Theater Posture Objective #3: Communicate USPACOM Intent & Resolve**

Theater Posture Objective #3	Communicate USPACOM Intent and Resolve to Safeguard US Interests	
	Source(s): PACOM Strategy & PACOM Posture Plan	
Supporting Goals	Source(s)	
Present Power Projection Capability Provide Effects Inside A2/AD Environment	PACAF Strategy Joint Operational Access Concept	
Provide AMD/Resiliency Active Defense Passive Defense	PACAF Strategy PACAF Strategy PACAF Strategy	
Effective Reach to Potential Conflict Areas Korean Peninsula East China Sea Taiwan South China Sea	Inherent in Objective Chapter 1.7 Potential Conflict Areas" Section Chapter 1.7 Potential Conflict Areas" Section Chapter 1.7 Potential Conflict Areas" Section Chapter 1.7 Potential Conflict Areas" Section	
Shape Chinese Alternatives to Favor Integration in Western Order	Chapter 2.7 Deep Engagement" Section	

Source: Author's Original Work.

The title of the third theater posture objective could have been simply "Deter Aggression." The actual title is consistent with the PACOM language but there is no doubt that this line of effort constitutes deterrence in its classical sense. As previously noted, actions speak louder than words. Actions in the Pacific include force posture arranged to present a resilient capability to project power. Another important supporting goal from this TPO is the necessity of forward basing and/or air-to-air refueling (AAR) capability to reach the four potential conflict areas in the Asia-Pacific. Finally, at the grand-strategic level, desirable posture alternatives would shape China's options in ways that encourage its leaders to integrate peacefully into the Western order.

**Table 5. Theater Posture Objective #4: Ensure Readiness to Fight and Win**

Theater Posture Objective #4	Ensure Readiness to Fight and Win Source(s): PACOM Strategy
Supporting Goals	Source(s)
Provide IAMD/Resiliency IAMD through attack operations Active Defense Passive Defense	PACOM Posture Plan & PACAF Strategy PACAF Strategy PACAF Strategy PACAF Strategy
Provide Foundation for Sustainable Logistical Support	Inherent in Objective
Effective Command and Control	PACAF Strategy
Prepare for Power Projection Locate, Target, & Suppress Hostile A2/AD (ISR, Prec Strike, AAR) Interdict Enemy Forces and Materiel Provide AIMT and MAS Deep Strike Capability	PACAF Strategy Joint Operational Access Concept Chapter 3.7 "Counter-Denial, Distance Interdiction" Chapter 3.7 "Counter-Denial, Distance Interdiction" Joint Operational Access Concept
Effectively Reach to Potential Conflict Areas	Inherent in Objective

Source: Author's Original Work.

"Ensure readiness to fight and win" is not a specific line of effort in the USPACOM Strategy, but it is a topic of emphasis. The Posture Analysis Construct argues the link between peacetime force posture and wartime success is sufficient to establish that "readiness to fight and win" deserves equal status with the official lines of effort. When evaluating the contributions of a specific posture alternative in regard to readiness to fight and win, one should consider several subordinate goals. Resilient IAMD resiliency is one of the most important aspects. Bases and forces must be protected or they cannot be utilized. Resilience can take the form of active and passive defenses, as well as strikes against enemy A2/AD capabilities. The basing arrangement must also enable logistical support and effective command and control. Generally, larger bases are easier to support logistically. Small, austere basing can also create difficulties for C2, especially in a contested information environment such as the one the US could face in the Pacific.

**Table 6. Theater Posture Objective #5: Attenuate US-China Security Dilemma**

Theater Posture Objective #5	Attenuate US-China Security Dilemma Source(s): Chapter 2.7 "Security Dilemma" Section
Supporting Goals	Source(s)
Pursue Offense-Defense Balance Technology Geography	Chapter 2.7 "Security Dilemma" Section Chapter 2.7 "Security Dilemma" Section Chapter 2.7 "Security Dilemma" Section
Pursue Offense-Defense Differentiation	Chapter 2.7 "Security Dilemma" Section
Avoid Signalling an Aggressive Posture toward China	Chapter 2.7 "Security Dilemma" Section

Source: Author's Original Work.

It appears none of the official posture guidance considers the implications of posture decisions on the US-China Security Dilemma. Perhaps classified publications address these considerations, or perhaps they have been overlooked completely due to the

difficulty associated with assessing the potential responses of Chinese leaders. The PAC uses Robert Jervis’s four-quadrant model to assess how specific posture actions might affect the security dilemma that exists between the US and China. Capabilities that are clearly defensive in nature or create an environment that favors the defensive side to offensive ones are preferable because they are more stabilizing.

**Table 7. Theater Posture Objective #6: Operate within a Realistic Budget**

Theater Posture Objective #6	Operate within a Realistic Budget	
	Source(s): Chapter 1.7 Budget Constraints Section	
	Supporting Goals	Source(s)
Minimize Total Costs		Chapter 1.7 Budget Constraints Section
Pursue Host Nation Support (HNS) from Regional Partners		"US Force Posture in the Asia-Pacific Region"
Minimize Additional Costs Relative to CONUS Basing		"A Cost Analysis of the US Air Force Overseas Posture"

Source: Author’s Original Work.

The final theater posture objective, “Operate within a Realistic Budget,” is the most straightforward of all. Cost-efficient alternatives receive higher scores, while options that increase cost receive lower scores. The underlying assumption is that military commitments in other theaters and American fiscal limitations will preclude any significant budget increases for PACAF’s force posture. One of the supporting goals is to pursue options that include host-nation support (HNS) from regional partners. This already occurs in Japan and South Korea where the two countries annually contribute \$2.37 billion and \$765 million respectively. HNS fosters cost-effective forward basing.<sup>31</sup>

A strategist evaluating posture alternatives can use the supporting goals provided above to assess six separate raw scores, one for each TPO. Scores range from zero to ten based on the value the alternative provides *for the entire theater*. Higher scores represent greater value for the US force posture. A score of “10” represents the maximum possible contribution an alternative could provide to a particular TPO. Scoring is subjective, but it is informed by the group of supporting goals associated with each TPO. Because all TPOs are not equally important, PAC calculations do not end with the raw scores.

### Grand-Strategic Weighting Factors

Many variables affect the relative priority of the TPOs, but the most significant is the choice of grand strategy. The Posture Analysis Construct accounts for varying

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31. David J. Berteau, Micheal J. Green, and Nicholas Szechenyi, “U.S. Force Posture Strategy in the Asia Pacific Region: An Independent Assessment” (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2012), 18.



priorities by utilizing a grand-strategic weighting system. Raw scores for TPOs are multiplied by a unique set of weighting factors for each of the grand strategies outlined in Chapter 2. For example, offshore balancers are most concerned with attenuating the security dilemma and reducing budgets, so those TPOs receive greater mathematical weight in the scoring system.

The weighting process can be explained using the sample alternative shown in table 8. The sample receives the raw scores shown in the white column in the center of the table. Each grand strategy has a different mix of adjustment factors corresponding to its perspective regarding relative importance. Raw scores are multiplied by adjustment factors to produced weighted scores. The sum of the weighted scores is provided at the bottom as a weighted total. *The strategy-specific weighted total scores are the most important numbers produced by the PAC system.* As such, they can be referred to as “PAC scores.” For example, a decision maker might ask, “What is the deep-engagement PAC score for alternative A?”

The weighting factors in this system are limited in two ways. First, each factor must be a number between one and five. Second, the sum of the six factors for each strategy cannot exceed 18. This arrangement forces a prioritization of values for each strategy. Eighteen is the product of six TPOs multiplied by the mean weighting factor of three. Table 8 contains an example. Offshore balancing’s adjustment factors, shown in the first gray column, consists of three 5s and three 1s. The highest priority TPOs were assigned the higher factors and the lower priorities were assigned lower ones. The sum of all factors is 18.

The author set the adjustment factors in table 8 based on his interpretation of the individual grand-strategic options. Those factors are the ones used for PAC scoring in Chapter 4. Another analyst may adjust the specific factors based on a different interpretation of grand-strategic priorities but the limitations should remain in effect.

**Table 8. Sample PAC Scoring with Grand-Strategic Weighting Factors**

Posture Alternative		SAMPLE	Raw Score (1-10)	Offshore Balancing		Deep Engagement		Containment		Hybrid of Offshore Balancing & Deep Engagement		
				Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	
TPO#1	Build Strong Relationships		5									
Remarks												
				5	25	2	10	2	10	4	20	
TPO#2	Maintain an Assured Presence		8									
Remarks												
				1	8	5	40	4	32	4	32	
TPO#3	Communicate US PACOM Intent and Resolve to Safeguard US Interests		7									
Remarks												
				1	7	4	28	4	28	3	21	
TPO#4	Ensure Readiness to Fight and Win		6									
Remarks												
				1	6	3	18	5	30	2	12	
TPO#5	Attenuate US-China Security Dilemma		2									
Remarks												
				5	10	2	4	2	4	2	4	
TPO#6	Operate within a Realistic Budget		2									
Remarks												
				5	10	2	4	1	2	3	6	
Statistical Data			Raw Total	Weighted Total		Weighted Total		Weighted Total		Weighted Total		
Range				66		104		106		95		
Variance												
Average Across All Strategies												
			30		66		104		106		95	
			40									
			340.92									
			92.75									

Source: Author's Original Work.

The complete PAC system used in Chapter 4 includes a fourth column of weighting factors used for a hybrid strategy of deep engagement in Northeast Asia and offshore balancing in Southeast Asia. It also includes additional statistical information to evaluate the flexibility of alternatives.

### Flexibility

No grand strategy remains constant. Changes in domestic politics, the economy, and international relations can lead to changes. An optimal force posture would be sufficiently flexible to remain viable under the rubric of evolving grand strategies. The PAC includes statistical tools to help assess the flexibility of posture alternatives. Those tools are average PAC score, range, and variance.

Average PAC score is a basic computation that simply finds the mean score across all considered grand-strategic alternatives. While it is tempting to use this number as the pinnacle of judgment tools, such temptation should be avoided. Average PAC score should, however, be used as a secondary consideration to determine the value the alternative provides across the spectrum of strategic approaches.

Range is the statistical calculation for the difference in the highest and lowest values. A lower value for range indicates greater flexibility. A large range indicates an alternative is very good for at least one strategy and very bad for at least one other strategy. Range has limitations as a statistical tool. Most importantly, it only represents the extreme values and not the ones in the middle. It does, however, provide indications of how dramatic the “worst-case” change in strategic direction would be.

Variance measure how far each number in the data set is from the mean. This statistical calculation considers all PAC scores, not just the highest and lowest values. Similar to range, lower values for variation represent greater flexibility.

Table 9 shows a complete PAC score sheet. The Posture Analysis Construct is detailed yet surprisingly quick to use. The system guides the strategy of force posture as it is applied to the real world. It is part *art* and part *science*. Detailed spreadsheets such as the one in table 9 are provided in the appendix for all the posture alternatives presented in Chapter 4 but the text will only contain a simplified form.

**Table 9. Sample of Complete PAC Scorecard**

Posture Alternative		SAMPLE	Raw Score (1-10)	Offshore/Balancing		Deep Engagement		Containment		Hybrid/Asymmetric	
				Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score
TPO#1	Build Strong Relationships										
	Supporting Goals	Remarks									
	Address Shared Threats										
	Secure Access to the Region										
	Facilitate Freedom of Movement										
	Pre-arrange for FOBs & Geographic Distribution										
	Enable Theater Security Cooperation										
	Advance Common Interests										
	IAMD/Passive Defense										
	Provide Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief										
	Keep Allies/Partners Committed to Western Institutions										
5				5	25	2	10	2	10	4	20
TPO#2	Maintain an Assured Presence										
	Supporting Goals	Remarks									
	Maintain Political Sustainability of Strategic Anchor Network										
	Ensure Protection of Critical Defense Infrastructure										
	Provide IAMD/Resiliency										
	Active Defense										
	Passive Defense										
	Geographic Distribution										
	Enable Peacetime Sustainment										
	Use Forces from Inside & Outside the Region to Signal to Partners										
	Keep Allies/Partners Committed to Western Institutions										
8				1	8	5	40	4	32	4	32
TPO#3	Communicate US PACOM Intent and Resolve to Safeguard US Interests										
	Supporting Goals	Remarks									
	Present Power Projection Capability										
	Provide Effects Inside the A2/AD Environment										
	Provide IAMD/Resiliency										
	Active Defense										
	Passive Defense										
	Geographic Distribution										
	Effective Reach to Potential Conflict Areas										
	Korean Peninsula										
	East China Sea										
	Taiwan										
	South China Sea										
	Shape Chinese Alternatives to Favor Integration in Western Order										
7				1	7	4	28	4	28	3	21
TPO#4	Ensure Readiness to Fight and Win										
	Supporting Goals	Remarks									
	Provide IAMD/Resiliency										
	IAMD through Attack Operations										
	Active Defense										
	Passive Defense										
	Provide Foundation for Sustainable Logistical Support										
	Effective Command and Control										
	Prepare for Power Projection										
	Locate/Target/Suppress Hostile A2/AD (ISR, Prec Strike, IAR)										
	Interdict Enemy Forces and Materiel										
	Provide IMT and MAS										
	Deep Strike Capability										
	Effectively Reach Potential Conflict Areas										
6				1	6	3	18	5	30	2	12
TPO#5	Attenuate US-China Security Dilemma										
	Supporting Goals	Remarks									
	Pursue Offense-Defense Balance										
	Technology										
	Geography										
	Pursue Offense-Defense Differentiation										
	Avoid Signaling an Aggressive Posture toward China										
2				5	10	2	4	2	4	2	4
TPO#6	Operate within a Realistic Budget										
	Supporting Goals	Remarks									
	Minimize Total Costs										
	Pursue Host Nation Support (HNS) from Regional Partners										
	Minimize Costs Relative to CONUS Basing										
2				5	10	2	4	1	2	3	6
Raw Total			30	Weighted Total	66	Weighted Total	104	Weighted Total	106	Weighted Total	95
Statistical Data											
Range	40										
Variance	340.92										
Average Across All Strategies	92.75										

Source: Author's Original Work.

### How to Read a PAC Scorecard

When looking at PAC scorecards, one should use the simple four-step process shown in table 10. Step 1, scan the raw scores for each posture objective. Step two, read the associated remarks explaining the raw scores paying particular attention to the remarks for the highest and lowest scores. They identify strengths and weaknesses. Step 3, review the weighted totals, also known simply as “PAC scores.” *Weighted totals are the PAC’s most important numbers because they represent the alternative’s overall ability to support each of the four strategy options.* The final step is to look at the

statistical data in the bottom left to determine the flexibility of the alternative. Small numbers for range and variance indicate the alternative performs consistently across the four strategy options.

**Table 10. How to Read a PAC Scorecard**

Posture Alternative	SAMPLE	Raw Score (1-10)	Offshore Balancing		Deep Engagement		Containment		Hybrid of Offshore Balancing & Deep Engagement		
			Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	
TPO#1	Build Strong Relationships	Step 1 Raw Scores	5	25	2	10	2	10	4	20	
Remarks											
TPO#2	Maintain an Assured Presence		1	8	5	40	4	32	4	32	
Remarks											
TPO#3	Communicate US PACOM Intent and Resolve to Safeguard US Interests		1	7	4	28	4	28	3	21	
Remarks											
TPO#4	Ensure Readiness to Fight and Win	1	6	3	18	5	30	2	12		
Remarks											
TPO#5	Minimize US-China Security Dilemma	5	10	2	4	2	4	2	4		
Remarks											
TPO#6	Operate within a Realistic Budget	5	10	2	4	1	2	3	6		
Remarks											
Statistical Data			Raw Total	Step 3 PAC Scores							
Range			40	Weighted Total		66		Weighted Total		106	
Variance			30.92								
Average across All			92.75								
Step 4 Flexibility Statistics											

based on how well they support the six posture objectives: (1) build strong relationships, (2) maintain an assured presence, (3) communicate USPACOM intent and resolve to safeguard US interests, (4) ensure readiness to fight and win, (5) attenuate US-China Security Dilemma, and (6) operate within a realistic budget. The PAC system has both subjective and objective aspects. It is best thought of as a mathematical framework that gives structure and rigor to the art of strategy. Its outputs assess both the value and the flexibility of posture alternatives. The next step in the analysis will be to put the construct to work.



## **Chapter 4**

### **Force Posture Analysis**

The crescendo is building. The plot in the Asia-Pacific grows more interesting by the day. A collision of the American vision and the Chinese Dream could lead to a Pacific nightmare. The challenge for US strategists is to develop a force posture that avoids an undesirable conflict while still protecting American interests. This chapter provides a solution to a portion of that challenge by answering a simple question, “What is the optimal posture for the USAF in the Asia-Pacific?”

Force posture decisions must consider the entire area of responsibility. The first three chapters of this study have done so by examining PACOM’s entire AOR. At this point, however, the information presented in previous chapters warrants a narrowing of the geographic area. Henceforth, the analysis will only address posture changes within the Western Pacific theater of operations (WPTO). This area extends from Thailand east to Guam and from Australia north to Japan and North Korea. The area is appropriate for two reasons. First, the WPTO includes all four potential conflict areas identified in Chapter 1: Taiwan, the Korean Peninsula, the East China Sea, and the South China Sea. Second, it appears no change is necessary for the USAF installations East of the WPTO. They are needed for the defense of US territory, as noted in Chapter 1. They also provide support links to sustain forward locations as noted in Chapter 3. Furthermore, they are not threatened as significantly as bases that fall within the A2/AD environment that spans much of the Western Pacific.

This chapter contains three sections. The first identifies five distinct posture alternatives for subsequent analysis. The second analyzes the alternatives using the Posture Analysis Construct presented in Chapter 3. The chapter concludes with findings and recommendations.

#### **Identification of Alternatives**

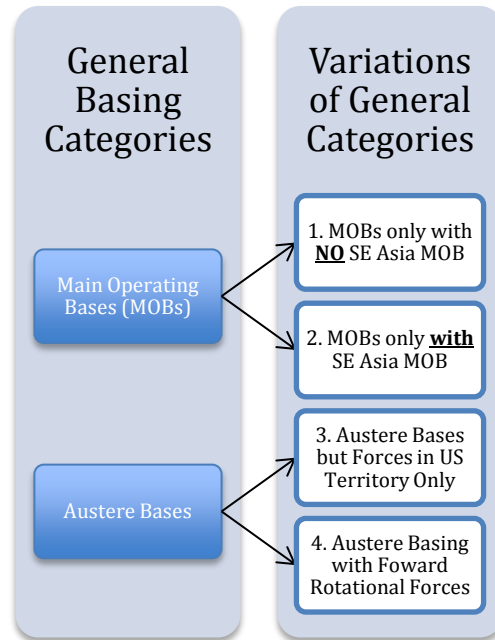
Land-based airpower installations fall into one of two general basing categories: main operating bases and austere bases. Infrastructure and dwell time distinguish the two categories. As the name implies, main operating bases (MOBs) are large airfields with realitively permanent infrastructure to support flying operations. Dwell time at MOBs is



measured in decades. MOBs can be in rear areas or forward locations. MOBs typically have greater active-defense capabilities than austere fields. Austere fields have few permanent structures and may or may not be regularly manned. When they are manned, the dwell time ranges from hours to years. Austere fields are generally in forward locations. They are often called forward operating bases (FOBs), but this term can be misleading because MOBs can be positioned forward as well.

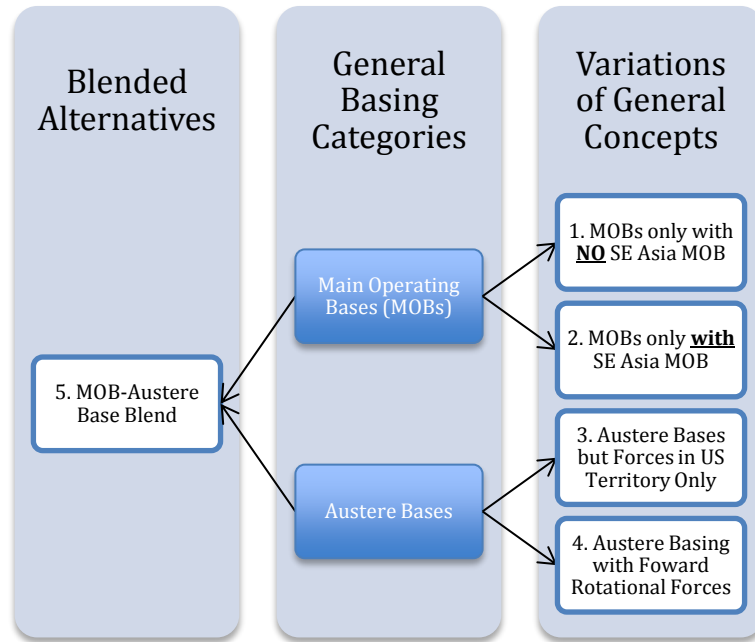
The US currently uses a MOB-only system in the Western Pacific. The first two alternatives analyzed are variations of the MOB-only method. Alternative 1 is an all-MOB theater with no MOBs in Southeast Asia. This alternative represents the status quo. Alternative 2 adds a hypothetical installation in Southeast Asia—an area that presently has very little USAF presence.

MOBs are easily susceptible to some hostile A2/AD capabilities because forces are concentrated at a relatively small number of airfields. Alternatives 3 and 4 seek to remedy that problem by replacing MOBs with a theater-wide network of austere bases. One potential advantage of austere basing is costs savings. Alternative 3 seeks to maximize cost savings by withdrawing US forces to American territory. Half the forces currently in the Western Pacific would return to the CONUS, while the other half would withdraw to Guam, Hawaii, or other US Pacific locations. Alternative 4 is a variation of the austere base construct that maintains forces on a rotational basis. This variation emphasizes the deterrent value of US forces operating from dispersed forward locations and their enhanced ability to withstand A2/AD attacks. Figure 21 graphically depicts Alternatives 1 through 4. This depiction illustrates that the first four alternatives are each homogenous.



**Figure 21. Posture Alternatives 1 through 4.**  
Source: Author's Original Work

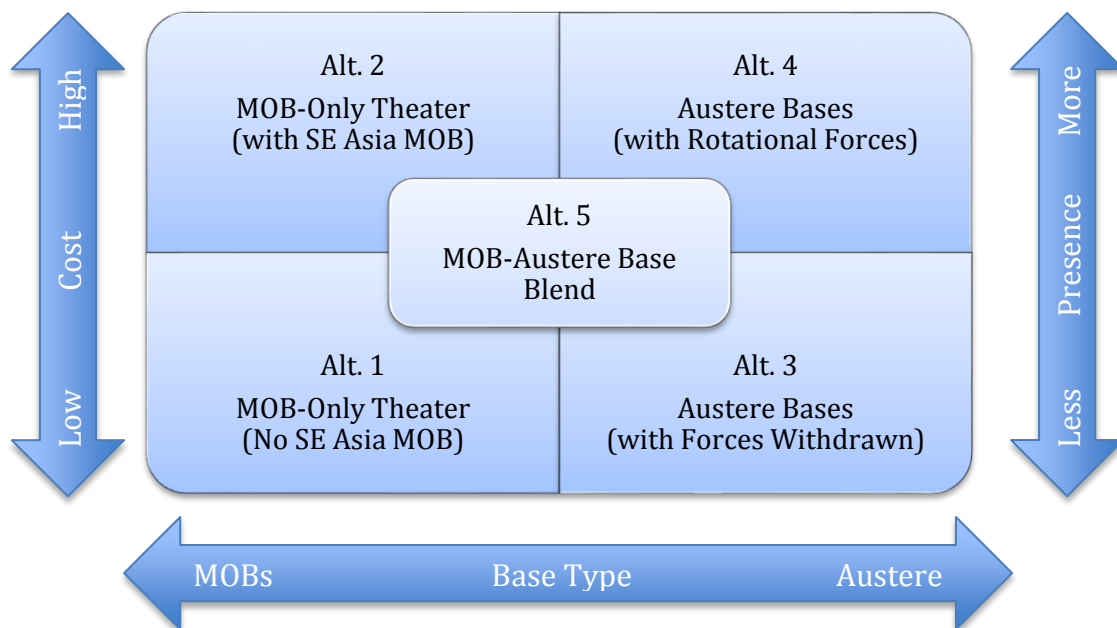
Alternative 5 is distinct. The creative process works in the opposite direction. It is a blend of main operating bases and austere bases not a derivative of a single category. Blending the two generic basing models has the potential to offset the weaknesses of each, while gaining the advantages of both. This option maintains MOBs where they are already present and adds austere bases in Southeast Asia to communicate US intent more effectively across all potential conflict areas.



**Figure 22. Posture Alternatives 1 through 5.**

Source: Author's Original Work.

The five alternatives identified are not the only possibilities. There are countless combinations. Nevertheless, five alternatives are slightly more than studies of this type normally examine. Often, the three most promising alternatives are the only ones analyzed. In this study, the five alternatives provide a useful representation of the possibilities across three spectra: base type, cost, and force presence. Figure 23 depicts the distribution of these alternatives across the spectra.



**Figure 23. Posture Alternatives Matrix.**

Source: Author's Original Work.

The alternatives are presented as stepping stones that lead from the present PACAF posture to the alternative recommended by this study. The pathway is winding at times because it explores contrasting alternatives.

### Analysis of Alternatives

This section steps through the five alternatives as analyzed using the Posture Analysis Construct. It is important to note that the PAC is not a scientific measurement system. It is a mathematical framework that lends structure and rigor to the art of strategy. The raw scores represent subjective results informed by a thorough examination of considerations. Its outputs assess both the value and the flexibility of posture alternatives. The text uses abbreviated scorecards to convey the most important highlights. The Appendix contains complete PAC scorecards for further reference. If necessary, one can review the Chapter 3 section entitled, "How to Read a PAC Scorecard" before proceeding.

#### Alternative 1 – Main Operating Bases Only (No SE Asia MOB)

When analyzing real-world problems, one is tempted to start from scratch and design the perfect answer. However, most military-strategic problems resemble

remodeling projects more than they do new construction. Alternative 1 is essentially the status quo option. The United States presently has six MOBs in the Western Pacific: Andersen Air Force Base is located on Guam. Osan AB and Kunsan AB are in South Korea. Yokota AB and Misawa AB are on the Japanese island Honshu, and Kadena AB is on the southern Japanese island Okinawa. There are currently no USAF MOBs in Southeast Asia.

Alternative 1 receives reasonably high scores from the Posture Analysis Construct. Table 11 presents an abbreviated scorecard. Five important observations emerge from the analysis. First, Alternative 1 provides assured presence in Northeast Asia. It thus enables strong relationships and communicates resolve. Second, the absence of a significant presence in Southeast Asia is detrimental to deterrence and readiness. It also exacerbates the security dilemma by ceding the local advantage to a hypothetical Chinese offensive. Third, MOBs are not, by their nature, resilient against A2/AD tactics. Fourth, the Alternative 1 is surprisingly cost effective. Fifth, the alternative slightly favors the hybrid strategy of deep engagement and offshore balancing, but is sufficiently flexible to work well for other strategies.

**Table 11. PAC Scorecard: Alternative 1 - MOB-Only Theater (No SE Asia MOB)**

Posture Alternative #1		MOB-Only Theater (No SE Asia MOB)	Raw Score	Offshore Balancing		Deep Engagement		Containment		Hybrid Deep Eng./S/Balancing		
				Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	
TPO #1	Build Strong Relationships		7	5	35	2	14	2	14	4	28	
Builds strongest relationships with closest allies in NE Asia. Considerably weaker in SE Asia where there is limited US presence.												
TPO #2	Maintain an Assured Presence		7	1	7	5	35	4	28	4	28	
Presence in NE Asia assures allies there. SE Asia partners receive some assurance from forces elsewhere in the theater but it may not be enough to keep them strongly committed to Western institutions.												
TPO #3	Communicate US PACOM Intent and Resolve to Safeguard US Interests		7	1	7	4	28	4	28	3	21	
PACOM intent to protect US interests in NE Asia is clear. Strong relationship with economic powers there helps encourage China to join the Western order. Resolve in SE Asia is unclear. Land-based airpower is challenged to reach S. China Sea.												
TPO #4	Ensure Readiness to Fight and Win		6	1	6	3	18	5	30	2	12	
Additional funding is needed to make MOBs more resilient. Their concentration presents a limited number of lucrative targets for adversaries. On a positive note, present constructs can reach out to potential conflict areas.												
TPO #5	Attenuate US-China Security Dilemma		5	5	25	2	10	2	10	2	10	
The posture is not especially provocative because it has been relatively static for decades. However, the absence of US forces in SE Asia favors the Chinese offense. This imbalance invites aggressive action from the PRC.												
TPO #6	Operate within a Realistic Budget		8	5	40	2	16	1	8	3	24	
Alternative is only slightly more expensive than CONUS basing thanks in part to HNS. Alternative already demonstrates the ability to operate on the real-world budget.												
Statistical Data			Raw Total	40	Weighted Total	120	Weighted Total	121	Weighted Total	118	Weighted Total	123
Range		5										
Variance		4.33										
Average Across All Strategies		120.5										

Source: Author's Original Work.

A strength of Alternative 1 is that it seems to place emphasis on America's closest partners by stationing most of its land-based airpower in Northeast Asia. Japan and South Korea are not only close allies, they are significant economic powers and major US trading partners as well. US presence there not only assures allies, it communicates resolve to potential adversaries. It also ensures the US is ready to fight to defend its interests if necessary.

The most critical weakness is the absence of an installation in Southeast Asia. This condition prevents Alternative 1 from providing sufficient assurance and deterrence in that area. This is the primary reason the scores in TPOs 1 through 4 are not higher. The absence of a base there also creates a major challenge for power projection into the

South China Sea. Even though air-refueling operations can extend fighter aircraft from existing MOBs, the sortie durations are too long for aircrews to sustain operations.

Not only does this hamper PACOM's effort to ensure readiness to fight and win, it actually exacerbates the local security dilemma. Robert Jervis describes situations as "doubly dangerous" when the offense has the advantage and an offensive posture is not easily distinguishable from a defensive one. When he originally wrote about security dilemmas in 1978, Jervis asserted, "there are no cases that totally fit this picture."<sup>1</sup> The extant situation in the South China Sea comes close. US land-based airpower is absent. Chinese DF-21 missiles threaten US aircraft carriers. The Chinese offensive capability clearly has the advantage. The short distance between the South China Sea and the Chinese mainland makes it difficult to discover an offensive shift in China's posture before it is too late to attempt a preventive response. Some would argue that China's efforts to build islands on Fiery Cross Reef and Mischief Reef already constitute aggression. Here, the absence of local US presence sways the offense-defense balance in favor of Chinese offense. The imbalance is destabilizing because it invites Chinese aggression.

The third observation is the susceptibility of MOBs to A2/AD tactics. The concentration of a large number of valuable assets on a small number of airfields presents a lucrative target for an adversary's missiles. Taking out a small number of runways could render hundreds of millions of dollars worth of aircraft ineffective. This factor adds risk to Alternative 1 because Kadena, Osan, and Kunsan are essentially forward locations for some scenarios. The addition of more THAAD batteries to intercept inbound threat missiles could enhance active defense, but such enhancement is expensive. Each THAAD battery costs \$800 million.<sup>2</sup> Additional funding could also provide passive defense using such means as hardened aircraft shelters and decoys. The United States can improve the resiliency of MOBs but it comes with a cost.

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1. Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," in *The Use of Force: Military Power and International Politics*, ed. Robert J. Art and Kenneth N. Waltz, 7th Edition (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 65.

2. Julian E. Barnes and Adam Entous, "World News: With an Eye on Pyongyang, U.S. Sending Missile Defenses to Guam," *Wall Street Journal, Eastern Edition*, 4 April 2013.



The fourth observation is that Alternative 1 is surprisingly cost effective. Host nation support helps keep the cost of operating the array of MOBs in the Western Pacific very close to the cost for operating the same assets in the CONUS. MOBs are also efficient in handling resources because logistical support flows into well-established facilities. Alternative 1 already operates under the current budget, so its financial feasibility is established.

The final observation comes from the weighted totals. Alternative 1 slightly favors the hybrid strategy of deep engagement and offshore balancing, but is sufficiently flexible to work well for other strategies. As noted in Chapter 2, the current US grand strategy in the Asia-Pacific is a hybrid one. One should thus expect the current force posture to fit the strategy. It does. The flexibility of the strategy is unexpected. One would predict that six MOBs in the Western Pacific would not fit well with a strategy of offshore balancing. Two factors explain this finding. First, the US is already employing offshore balancing in Southeast Asia where no MOBs currently exist. Second, offshore balancing places emphasis on cost effectiveness and Alternative 1 is reasonably cost-effective.

Alternative 1 scores relatively well in many ways. Its raw scores are acceptable for most theater posture objectives. It is sufficiently flexible to accommodate all four theater strategy options. It is also compliant with the budget. There are, however, weaknesses as well. MOBs are not resistant to A2/AD attacks. Improved resilience requires additional funding. Furthermore, the absence of USAF presence in Southeast Asia limits PACOM's efforts in the AOR and opens the door for Chinese aggression in the South China Sea.

One question remains. Can the US do better? Are there alternatives that address the weaknesses of the status-quo option? The next four alternatives are compared to the current approach in order to determine if they do, in fact, improve on the current posture.

#### **Alternative 2 – Main Operating Bases Only (With SE Asia MOB)**

Alternative 2 also relies exclusively on Main Operating Bases, but seeks to improve on Alternative 1 by adding a MOB in Southeast Asia. The hypothetical MOB is a replica of Kadena AB. It would be home to two fighter squadrons and one tanker squadron. For purposes of analysis, the base would be equipped with aircraft transferred

from the CONUS.<sup>3</sup> No specific location for the new MOB is identified because the intent of the study is to compare theater-wide options. If Alternative 2 is the most promising option overall, the next step should be to evaluate potential SE Asia MOB locations against one another using the PAC.<sup>4</sup>

**Table 12. PAC Scorecard: Alternative 2 - MOB-Only Theater (With SE Asia MOB)**

Posture Alternative #2		MOB-Only Theater (With SE Asia MOB)	Raw Score	Offshore Balancing		Deep Engagement		Containment		Hybrid Deep Eng./S/Balancing	
				Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score
TPO #1	Build Strong Relationships		8	5	40	2	16	2	16	4	32
MOBs across the whole theater is generally positive but there are questions about the political sustainability of MOBs in SE Asia. Clarke AB closed in 1991 for such reasons.											
TPO #2	Maintain an Assured Presence		8	1	8	5	40	4	32	4	32
This posture should keep allies/partners committed to Western institutions. Peacetime sustainment is easier with MOBs. However, MOBs alone do not solve resiliency problem. Additional costs are required for hardening, decoys, HAADs, etc.											
TPO #3	Communicate US PACOM Intent and Resolve to Safeguard US Interests		8	1	8	4	32	4	32	3	24
This alternative enables effective reach to all potential conflict areas. However, A2/AD threat is unmitigated. All MOB option presents potential adversaries with concentrated target complexes.											
TPO #4	Ensure Readiness to Fight and Win		7	1	7	3	21	5	35	2	14
Strong points of all MOB posture are command and control and logistical support. This option also provides geographic reach to all potential conflict areas but requires additional expenditures for sufficient active or passive defense.											
TPO #5	Attenuate US-China Security Dilemma		2	5	10	2	4	2	4	2	4
Addition of a new MOB in SE Asia will likely be inflammatory and could even provoke China to respond.											
TPO #6	Operate within a Realistic Budget		2	5	10	2	4	1	2	3	6
Requires the construction of an entirely new MOB and expenditures for missile defense for all MOBs. SE Asian states unlikely to provide financial host nation support.											
Statistical Data			Raw Total 35	Weighted Total 83		Weighted Total 117		Weighted Total 121		Weighted Total 112	
Range 38											
Variance 296.92											
Average Across All Strategies 108.25											

Source: Author's Original Work

The PAC provides four key observations about this alternative. First, the presence of forces in Southeast Asia enhances the scores for each of the first four posture

3. Aircraft for the base could be transferred from within PACAF instead. The origin of the aircraft has very little effect on the analysis.

4. Four options, in order of decreasing potential, are: (1) a location on the southern Philippine Island of Mindanao, (2) reopening Clark AB, Philippines (3) Da Nang or another similar location in Vietnam, and (4) an unspecified location Thailand.

objectives. Second, the susceptibility of MOBs to A2/AD tactics limits Alternative 2's ability to ensure readiness to fight and win. Third, adding a new MOB in Southeast Asia has the potential to inflame the US-China security dilemma. Finally, the costs associated with the new MOB outweigh its gains except in a scenario that favors a containment strategy. Further discussion on these observations is provided below.

The addition of a MOB in Southeast Asia enables Alternative 2 to enhance PACOM's ability to build strong relationships, maintain an assured presence, communicate resolve, and ensure readiness to fight and win. Forces in the neighborhood send a much stronger message than forces stationed 2,000 miles away in Korea or Japan. This is yet another example of how the tyranny of distance plays into decision making in the Asia-Pacific. The additional MOB also provides fighter aircraft geographical reach to the potential conflict area in the South China Sea.

Alternative 2's gains are inhibited by the vulnerability of MOBs to A2/AD attacks. The addition of a single new target complex does not significantly complicate an adversary's game plan. MOB-only postures can never completely overcome this handicap, even with the addition of expensive defensive prosthetics. THAAD can provide some protection, but a battery's supply of missiles is exhaustible.

Adding a new MOB in Southeast Asia also has the potential to complicate the US-China security dilemma. China claims the majority of the South China Sea as its territorial waters. Chinese leaders would almost certainly view a new permanent US installation in Southeast Asia as an American effort to contain China's growing influence. A move such as this could provoke China to respond aggressively.

The costs associated with the new MOB outpace its gains for most grand strategies. Constructing and equipping an entirely new MOB is expensive, and construction costs are not the only problem. Operating costs in SE Asia will likely exceed costs in NE Asia because the potential host nations do not have the resources to contribute as much as Japan and Korea do. Furthermore, Alternative 2 would require active and passive defense expenditures beyond those already needed for existing MOBs.

The PAC scores reveal that only the containment strategy benefits from the addition of a new MOB in Southeast Asia. When compared to the status quo, the weighted total for the containment strategy is boosted from 118 to 121. All other grand

strategies for the theater are projected to suffer under this alternative due to budgetary and security-dilemma considerations. Adding more bases and forces is particularly inconsistent with the strategy of offshore balancing.

Overall, Alternative 2 is inferior to Alternative 1 except in a situation in which containment is necessary because China is growing openly aggressive. This analysis may explain the fact that proposals to build a MOB in SE Asia are rarely found in contemporary strategic literature. The next step in the pathway examines a dramatic change in US basing strategy. It asks whether austere bases can provide additional presence, solve the A2/AD resiliency problem, attenuate the security dilemma, and alleviate budgetary pressures.

### **Alternative 3 – Theater Wide Austere Basing (Forces Withdrawn)**

Alternative 3 represents a quintessential offshore balancing approach. It seeks to save money and reduce America's exposure to potential conflicts by giving greater security responsibilities to other regional powers.<sup>5</sup> To execute Alternative 3, PACAF would close all MOBs in Western Pacific except Andersen AFB, Guam. A web of austere fields would replace the other MOBs. Andersen would remain open because it is on US territory and at least one MOB is necessary for a number of reasons including logistical movements, bomber operations, and ISR aircraft operations. This alternative also withdraws all PACAF combat forces in the region currently on foreign soil. Aircraft would transfer to Guam, Hawaii, and the CONUS. The alternative does not reduce the overall USAF force levels. Changes to the force structure of the US Air Force as a whole are outside the intended scope of this study.<sup>6</sup>

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5. John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Updated Edition (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014), 385.

6. Some advocates of offshore balancing may criticize the fact that the option does not include an overall drawdown because that is how they intend to achieve cost savings. The PAC system shows that even if the maximum score of "10" is assigned to the budget objective, it is not sufficient to change the overall recommendation.

**Table 13. PAC Scorecard: Alt. 3 - Theater-Wide Austere Basing (Withdraw Forces)**

Posture Alternative #3	Theater-Wide Austere Basing Withdraw Forces	Raw Score (1-10)	Offshore Balancing		Deep Engagement		Containment		Hybrid Deep Eng. & S/Balancing	
			Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score
TPO#1	<b>Build Strong Relationships</b>									
	Closest allies will feel abandoned when forces are withdrawn. MOB provides geographic distribution and could be used for cooperation exercises but overall commitment is low.	3	5	15	2	6	2	6	4	12
TPO#2	<b>Maintain an Assured Presence</b>									
	Withdrawing forces has a major negative impact on efforts to maintain an assured presence. Move is likely to make allies and partners commitment to Western institutions.	2	1	2	5	10	4	8	4	8
TPO#3	<b>Communicate US PACOM Intent and Resolve to Safeguard US Interests</b>									
	Withdrawn forces show lack of resolve. No forces in theater makes overcoming anti-access challenge even more difficult. Does not encourage China to integrate in Western order.	2	1	2	4	8	4	8	3	6
TPO#4	<b>Ensure Readiness to Fight and Win</b>									
	Greater resiliency through geographic distribution but lack of MOB in forward locations make logistics challenging. Reach is enhanced but effectiveness is questionable due to tough logistics.	4	1	4	3	12	5	20	2	8
TPO#5	<b>Attenuate US-China Security Dilemma</b>									
	Decreases the US-China security dilemma but gives China an offensive advantage over regional peers. Would likely lead to pursuit of nuclear weapons by ROK and Japan.	6	5	30	2	12	2	12	2	12
TPO#6	<b>Operate within a Realistic Budget</b>									
	Maintaining a moderate web of austere bases still incurs some costs. Small long-term cost savings results from moving operational units to CONUS. Units moved to Guam/Hawaii close HNS.	8	5	40	2	16	1	8	3	24
Statistical Data		Raw Total	Weighted Total		Weighted Total		Weighted Total		Weighted Total	
Range		31	25		93		64		62	
Variance		202.92								
Average across All Strategies		72.25								

Source: Author's Original Work.

The scores for this offshore-balancing-inspired alternative are dramatically lower than the first two. Three observations deserve mention. First, withdrawing forces harms relationships with allies and partners, communicates a lack of resolve to protect interests, and decreases readiness to fight. Second, Alternative 3's predominantly austere base posture poses major challenges for logistics as well as command and control (C2). Finally, Alternative 3 achieves its highest scores from modest budget savings and its ability to attenuate the US-China security dilemma.

The first observation is the most damning. The first four theater posture objectives suffer significantly if PACAF withdraws forces and closes MOB in exchange for austere fields. Withdrawing forces essentially gives up on the idea of assured presence. Currently strong relationships would suffer. Japan and South Korea would naturally interpret the movement as tantamount to an American abandonment of the partnership. Their relationship as strategic anchors for the US would be in jeopardy. The

hope of building more strong relationships would be lost altogether because withdrawal signals a lower commitment to the region. Even Southeast Asia would feel the effects despite currently have no US MOBs. The absence of any full-time presence in the region is anything but reassuring.

Empty austere fields also communicate a very low level of resolve. China would interpret the move as a clear signal that the US is not committed to protecting its Asia-Pacific interests. Furthermore, the readiness to fight suffers from the fact that there are no forward-deployed forces should a conflict erupt involving China or North Korea. The US would inevitably be slower to respond.

The second observation from the PAC scorecard is that Alternative 3's posture poses challenges for logistics and for command and control. Fuel, munitions, and maintenance equipment comprise the nutrition that powers major combat operations. Should use of the austere bases become necessary in a contingency, supplying them with only a single MOB in the Western Pacific would be a nightmare. Command and control would also be difficult. USAF contingencies are coordinated using the Air Tasking Order (ATO) generated by the theater's Air Operations Center (AOC). The main PACAF AOC is in Hawaii, thousands of miles from the austere fields. A complex base-hopping system would create challenges for the current Air Force C2 construct.

This concept achieves its highest scores from is budget savings. These gains would be tangible but modest. Long-term budget savings are projected due to the elimination of the costs associated with operating and maintaining MOBs. However, three factors mitigate the gains. First, maintaining an adequate web of austere fields does require some costs. If no money is spent on them, the lack of maintenance would delay their availability in contingencies. Second, removing forces from Japan and Korea would eliminate the host nation support they currently provide. The savings gained by moving forces to US territory, especially isolated areas such as Guam and Hawaii, would be slim if they even materialize at all. Third, closing bases shifts expenses, rather than cutting them. The majority of costs associated with bases are connected to the flying operations they support. According to a 2013 RAND report, the "costs of basing USAF units overseas are small relative to the costs of equipping, manning, and operating the unit. From a grand-strategic perspective, a U.S. Air Force of a given size and capability will



cost essentially the same regardless of where in the world it is based.”<sup>7</sup> RAND estimates if all PACAF installations were closed the USAF would only save two percent of its annual budget. Reducing infrastructure achieves some savings but operating the aircraft is still expensive whether they are stationed in Korea or California.

The other potential advantage of Alternative 3 is its ability to attenuate the US-China security dilemma. Assessing this potential is challenging because Alternative 3 exerts both positive and negative forces on the dilemma. The positive of a US force withdrawal is the transition to a posture that is much less threatening from China’s perspective. When only the US-China security dilemma is considered, this alternative should decrease the potential for arms proliferation and reduce American exposure to an undesirable conflict. From a negative perspective, the step may embolden China to fill the power vacuum, accelerate its aggressive expansion into the disputed maritime regions, and exert greater influence over its neighbors. If the Air Force withdrawal were coupled with similar steps by the other US services, regional arms proliferation would undoubtedly ensue. Japan and South Korea would probably acquire nuclear weapons. The region could become remarkably unstable. Despite all these negatives, offshore balancers would argue that the unstable Asia-Pacific is mostly a problem for the nations located in the region. An American withdrawal abandons the condition that causes the security dilemma. The vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean separates the United States from China and will protect core American interests for decades. Considering all of the above, Alternative 3 scores a 6 for its ability to attenuate the security dilemma. It certainly reduces the short-term potential for conflict between China and the United States. However, the long-term effects suggest regional destabilization and that could draw the United States back in the to region to face a future condition that is considerably bleaker.

As expected, the PAC scorecard indicates that Alternative 3 best fits the strategy of offshore balancing. PAC scores for the other strategies are the lowest so far. The alternative is inflexible as well. The scores span a range five times larger than the status quo posture. Remarkably, even though Alternative 3 works best if the nation intends to use an offshore balancing strategy, its PAC score of 93 is less than the score of 120 that

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7. Mills et al., *A Cost Analysis of the U.S. Air Force Overseas Posture*, 27.



Alternative 1 received for offshore balancing. The analysis leads to the conclusion that Posture Alternative 3 is detrimental to PACOM's pursuit of its stated objectives for the Asia-Pacific.

One finding from the RAND study cited above warned of "making choices that produce relatively modest savings, but with potentially enormous strategic and fiscal consequences."<sup>8</sup> Posture Alternative 3 is an example of just that kind of mistake. But what if the idea of the austere fields is paired with rotational forces to provide presence? Could that solve the presence problem and provide greater resilience against the A2/AD threat by dispersing forces?

#### **Alternative 4 – Theater Wide Austere Basing (with Rotational Forces)**

Alternative 3's removal of forces from the Western Pacific created an adverse strategic fog. That fog obscured the potential to use dispersed austere fields to solve the A2/AD resiliency problem faced by a MOB-only posture. Alternative 4 lifts the fog by returning the forward-deployed forces. Alternative 3 focused on attenuating the security dilemma and reducing costs. Alternative 4 makes resilience the top priority. The base distribution is identical to Alternative 3. A web of austere fields replaces MOBs on foreign territory. Research indicates there are as many as 258 airfields in the WPTO with the potential to be used as austere fields.<sup>9</sup> When compared to just six US MOBs in the same geographic area, the expected increase in resilience is dramatic. Dispersing forces complicates the targeting problem for adversary missile planners. Compared to Alternative 1, the largest expected gains would be in resiliency.

Because the concept of austere fields and dispersal are not consistent with permanently stationed forces, the aircraft and personnel will be provided through the USAF's Air Expeditionary Force (AEF) system. The US continues to use this system to maintain a consistent presence in the Middle East without permanent forces. The rotation of forces in PACAF would be similar. The difference would lie in the number and size of the installations used. In order to complicate the adversary A2/AD targeting plan, the

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8. Patrick Mills et al., *A Cost Analysis of the U.S. Air Force Overseas Posture: Informing Strategic Choices* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2013), 29.

9. Robert D. Davis, "Forward Arming and Refueling Points for Fighter Aircraft," *Air & Space Power Journal* 28, no. 5 (9 October 2014): 15.

forces would unpredictably rotate among dozens of airfields in Western Pacific. Fighter squadrons would disperse their aircraft across several relatively close airfields.

**Table 14. PAC Scorecard: Alt. 4 - Theater-Wide Austere Basing (Rotational Forces)**

Posture Alternative#4		Theater-Wide Austere Basing Rotate Forces	Raw Score	Offshore Balancing		Deep Engagement		Containment		Hybrid Deep Eng./Offshore Balancing		
				Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	
TPO#1	Build Strong Relationships		6	5	30	2	12	2	12	4	24	
Enables greater geographic access to address shared threats. Provides bases and forces for theater security cooperation exercises in more locations. Negatively, less-permanent FOBs signal a lower level of commitment especially to closest allies.												
TPO#2	Maintain an Assured Presence		4	1	4	5	20	4	16	4	16	
This alternative provides expectations of resiliency but decreases the support of the strategic anchor network. Creates significant challenges for peacetime sustainment.												
TPO#3	Communicate US PACOM Intent and Resolve to Safeguard US Interests		7	1	7	4	28	4	28	3	21	
Communication of intent with only FOBs requires a steady rotation of tactical forces. This could be costly and logistically challenging but is likely possible. Option also presents greater power projection capability in an A2/AD environment.												
TPO#4	Ensure Readiness to Fight and Win		6	1	6	3	18	5	30	2	12	
Resiliency relies almost entirely on passive defense. Active BMD would be too slow to set up as forces bounce between FOBs. A network of austere bases creates challenges for command and control and logistical support.												
TPO#5	Attenuate US-China Security Dilemma		5	5	25	2	10	2	10	2	10	
Geographic distribution favors the defense but moving forces forward into new areas to change the Chinese are likely to view as aggressive.												
TPO#6	Operate within a Realistic Budget		4	5	20	2	8	1	4	3	12	
Force sustainment costs are much higher due to logistical challenges. HNS likely to decrease.												
Statistical Data			Raw Total	32	Weighted Total	92	Weighted Total	96	Weighted Total	100	Weighted Total	95
Range												
Variance												
Average Across All Strategies												

Source: Author's Original Work

Alternative 4 is an improvement compared to Alternative 3, but still falls well short of the mark set by the status-quo option. The weighted totals indicate that it is not the best posture alternative for PACAF. Although the option is lukewarm overall, the PAC scorecard still provides five informative observations. First, austere fields can be more resilient than MOBs, so long as they are more numerous. Second, logistical challenges arising from operating without MOBs offset the gains in deterrence and warfighting readiness provided by the resilient austere-only posture. Third, replacing main operating bases with austere fields decreases the level of assured presence. Fourth, strategic relationships suffer from the uncertainty created by perceptions of decreased

commitment. Fifth, Alternative 4 is less advantageous than the status quo in terms of cost savings. Finally, it is equal to the status quo in regards to attenuating the security dilemma.

When facing an advanced A2/AD threat, a greater number of austere bases presents a more resilient posture than a smaller number of main operating bases. MOBs create a concentrated target. Strikes against a small number of runways and POL storage facilities can limit operations for a large number of aircraft. If the aircraft were dispersed across a large number of airfields, the adversary would have many more targets to strike and is much more likely to be deterred since success is less assured.

One would expect the increased resilience of austere fields to boost the raw scores for TPOs 3 and 4. However, they are equal to the status quo alternative because logistical challenges arising from operating without MOBs offset the gains in deterrence and warfighting readiness provided by austere fields. Providing fuel, munitions, and aircraft parts for major combat operations is challenging, even when aircraft are operating from the more efficient MOB structure. It is not impossible to provide logistical support to dispersed bases but the inefficiencies will place some restrictions on combat effectiveness. The offsetting factors result in raw scores for TPOs 3 and 4 identical to the scores earned by the status quo option.

There are more severe problems for Alternative 4 than its logistical challenges. Replacing main operating bases with austere fields decreases the level of assured presence. The dwell time at austere fields is shorter than it is at MOBs. This detail is not lost on regional partners. A shift away from MOBs might appear as the first step in a gradual withdrawal. Even if partners do not fear abandonment, the commitment level communicated is undoubtedly lower than that conveyed by a large, semi-permanent installation.

Strategic relationships suffer from the uncertainty created by perceptions of decreased commitment. Allies and partners would be tempted to hedge their security by courting China as well. For Alternative 4, this hazard is most significant with America's closest partners. Relations with nations that currently have no US presence might actually become stronger due to the added presence of austere bases and rotational US forces.

Alternative 4 is less advantageous than the status quo in terms of cost savings. Specific studies about the costs of a rotational force posture for the Pacific are not available in the public domain but RAND conducted a similar study for the US Air Force in the European theater. Their data indicate that maintaining a consistent level of European partnership building activities with forces stationed in the CONUS rather than Europe would create a *four-fold* increase in costs.<sup>10</sup> That cost could increase even further if PACOM desires a deterrent presence rather just participation in partnership building activities.

The effects of Alternative 4 on the security dilemma are also offsetting when compared to the status-quo option. Both Alternative 1 and Alternative 4 earn a score of 5 for their ability to attenuate the US-China security dilemma. Dispersed operations favor the defense due to their greater resilience. Those gains, however, are counterbalanced by the fact that Chinese leaders could easily view the major change in posture as a precursor to offensive action.

The Posture Analysis Construct indicates that Alternative 4 is not superior to the status quo. Although a large number of austere fields are inherently more resilient in to A2/AD tactics than a smaller number of MOBs, the negatives outweigh the positives. Logistical challenges restrict the power projection capability of austere fields. Assured presence decreases when MOBs are broken up into austere fields that have a more temporary nature. Strategic relationships suffer from the uncertainty created by perceptions of decreased commitment. Finally, Alternative 4 is less advantageous than the status quo in terms of cost savings and equal in regards attenuating the security dilemma. With three out of four alternatives evaluated, the status quo remains undefeated. One contender remains.

#### **Alternative 5 – MOB-Austere Base Blend**

Alternative 5 is a blend of main operating bases and austere bases. A blend such as this could take many forms but Alternative 5 will use a simple combination. All

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10. Jennifer D. P. Moroney et al., *Working with Allies and Partners: A Cost-Based Analysis of U.S. Air Forces in Europe* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2012), 52. Operations in the Pacific are generally cheaper, so this number might be lower in the WPTO than in Europe. However, it is highly probable that expenses for rotational forces would still exceed the expense of operations with forces permanently stationed in theater.

MOBs currently in place will stay open. PACAF will begin operating a network of austere fields in Southeast Asia, where the USAF currently has no presence. The additional austere fields should provide geographic reach sufficient for fighter aircraft operations in all potential conflict areas.

**Table 15. PAC Scorecard: Alt. 5 – MOB-Austere Base Blend**

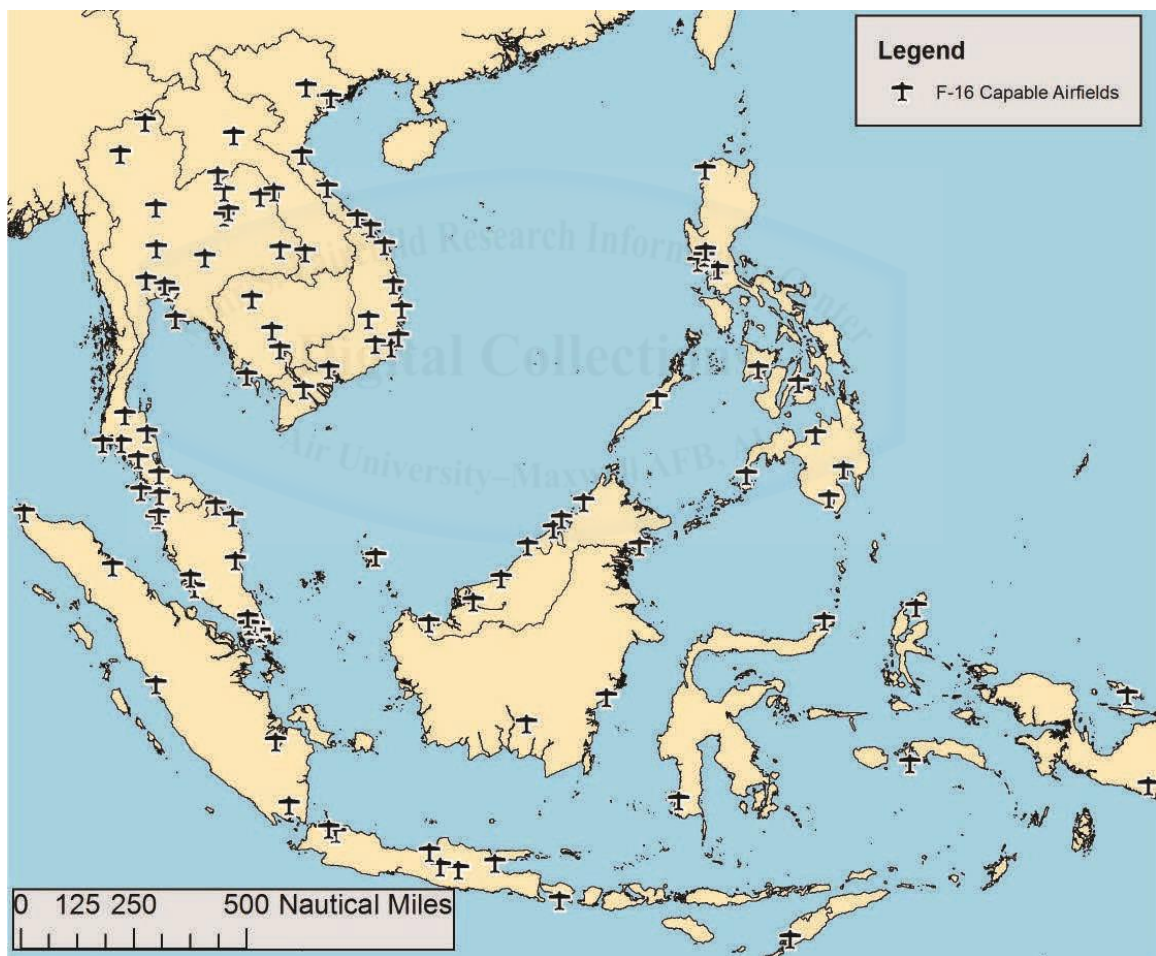
Posture Alternative#5		MOB-AustereBlend	Raw Score	OffshoreBalancing		DeepEngagment		Containment		HybridEng. & D/S2 Balancing		
				Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	
TPO#1	BuildStrongRelationships			8	5	40	2	16	2	16	4	32
MaintainsStrongRelationshipsinNEAsia. Addressesall anticipatedSharedThreats. StrengthensRelationshipsinSE Asia. Isalso more politically viable there thanMOBs. Could enhanceHADRoperations.												
TPO#2	MaintainanAssuredPresence			8	1	8	5	40	4	32	4	32
MaintainsStrongestTieswithStrategicanchors. Adds rotationalpresenceinSEAsia.												
TPO#3	CommunicateUSPACOMIntentand ResolveToSafeguardUSInterests			8	1	8	4	32	4	32	3	24
Providesdeterrenceinall conflict areas. Createsmore complextargetingproblemforadversaries.												
TPO#4	EnsureReadinessToFightandWin			7	1	7	3	21	5	35	2	14
ProvidesEffectiveReachforall potential conflict areas. ProvidesImprovedResilienceagainstA2/ADwhencompared totheStatusquo. MOBsstillneedgreaterMissileDefense.												
TPO#5	AttenuateUS-ChinaSecurityDilemma			7	5	35	2	14	2	14	2	14
ReturnsOffense-defenseBalanceToSEAsia. Austerefields inSEAsiaallowUS to differentiateits position by presence orabsenceofforces. NewfieldscouldbeSlightly provocativeToChina.												
TPO#6	OperatewithinanRealisticBudget			7	5	35	2	14	1	7	3	21
AusterefieldsAddsmallCostsbecauseRunwaysarealready present. NoLossofHNS. AlternativeisnearlyBudget neutral.												
Statistical Data		Raw Total	45	Weighted Total	133	Weighted Total	137	Weighted Total	136	Weighted Total	137	
Range												4
Variance												3.58
Average Across All Strategies												135.75

Source: Author's Original Work.

The analysis of Alternative 5 indicates that a blended approach outperforms all other alternatives. Most of the five observations are positive. First, relationships in Southeast Asia are strengthened without diminishing the strong partnerships in Northeast Asia. Second, new austere fields facilitate presence and communicate US resolve in an area that is currently underserved. Third, adversaries engaging in A2/AD tactics face a more distributed, more resilient posture. Fourth, US presence in Southeast Asia restores offense-defense balance, thereby attenuating the security dilemma. Fifth, the alternative

is nearly budget neutral because the austere bases already exist and the forces that could rotate through them are already in theater. There could, however, be a modest increase in operating funds in order to adopt this posture.

One of the main benefits of Alternative 5 is that it strengthens relationships in Southeast Asia without diminishing the strong partnerships in Northeast Asia. From a USAF perspective, the status quo neglects the area surrounding the South China Sea. PACAF can utilize austere fields and rotations of forces already in theater to improve partnerships. RAND reports there are already more than one hundred airfields in Southeast Asia capable of supporting F-16 operations.<sup>11</sup>



**Figure 24. F-16 Capable Airfields in Southeast Asia.**

Source: Stacie L. Pettyjohn and Alan J. Vick, *The Posture Triangle* (RAND Corporation, 2013).

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11. Stacie L. Pettyjohn and Alan J. Vick, *The Posture Triangle* (RAND Corporation, 2013), [http://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR402.html](http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR402.html), 26.



The Posture Analysis Construct identified weaknesses in the status quo arising from America's conspicuous absence from Southeast Asia. Not only did it limit PACOM's ability to maintain an assured presence, it also destabilized the security dilemma by tipping the offense-defense balance in favor of Chinese aggression. New austere fields facilitate presence and communicate US resolve in an area that is currently underserved.

Alternative 5 is not a "silver bullet" that eliminates the A2/AD challenge. It does, however, take useful steps in the right direction. It presents a more distributed posture that is inherently more resilient than the status quo. Resilience benefits at least three theater posture objectives. First, presence provides greater assurance when the force is resilient. Second, as argued in nuclear deterrence theory, a retaliatory force able to survive the first strike is more capable of effectively communicating resolve than one that is not survivable. Third, a resilient force greatly enhances the ability to fight and win. A robust defense is a catalyst for victory.

The fourth observation notes that US presence in Southeast Asia restores offense-defense balance to a local security dilemma approaching what Jervis would call "doubly dangerous."<sup>12</sup> Alternative 5's overall effect on the security dilemma is considered positive when compared to the status quo but it is not a perfect solution. Austere bases and rotational forces are less provocative than a MOB with permanent forces in the same region. Nonetheless, it is still possible that the influx of US airpower to Southeast Asia could provoke China. The provocation can be lessened or possibly avoided altogether if the US is clever about its return to the region. PACAF should take slow incremental steps as it moves into Southeast Asia. It should begin with a small contingent of rotational forces participating in partnership building exercises. These forces should transition from one austere field to another at unpredictable intervals. Rotational forces should increase in strength and frequency until PACAF maintains uninterrupted presence in Southeast Asia. Perhaps PACAF's leaders could imagine themselves slicing the other side of the salami that Chinese butchers have been steadily trimming for years. Although the security dilemma remains significant, Alternative 5's overall effect on the dilemma is

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12. Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," 65.



positive because it restores offense-defense balance and its potential for provocation can be mitigated.

The final observation about Alternative 5 is that it is a relatively low-cost option. Both the Air and Space Power Journal and the RAND Corporation have published reports documenting the existence of numerous airfields suitable to be used as austere bases.<sup>13</sup> PACAF could conduct periodic operations at the austere fields with assigned forces or forces on loan as a Theater Security Package (TSP). PACAF has five assigned F-16 squadrons that could utilize the 100 potential fields shown in figure 24. TSP deployments already take place to Andersen AB and other locations in South Korea. While the option is slightly less budget friendly than the status quo, its benefits outweigh its costs.

The PAC scores for Alternative 5 are higher across the board than those of any other option. The scoring also indicates that the MOB-austere base blend is the most flexible option. The range of its scores is smaller, and the variance is lower than any of its competition. Alternative 5 enhances presence, strengthens relationships, increases deterrence, boosts readiness, and attenuates the security dilemma. These positives are achieved at low additional cost. The results are in. A blend of MOBs and austere bases provide the optimal posture for PACAF.

### **Findings and Recommendations**

The process of identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the available alternatives leads to several findings. Table 16 consolidates these findings into a single list. The eighth finding is the only one not previously noted. It is not unique to any specific alternative. It is common to all of them. All five posture alternatives are relatively neutral when it comes to supporting maritime operations. However, the posture alternatives' collective neutrality does not imply that PACAF forces are prepared for missions such as air interdiction of maritime targets or maritime air support. One can imagine a variety of scenarios in which the national command authority chooses to execute a Counter-Denial/Distant-Interdiction strategy rather than strikes on an adversary's home territory. PACAF should be postured to support such a strategy. To do so, it should

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13. Davis, "Forward Arming and Refueling Points for Fighter Aircraft"; Pettyjohn and Vick, *The Posture Triangle*.

equip existing airframes with the capability to carry and deliver weapons against seaborne targets. This capability would reinforce the Navy and complement the USAF demonstrated proficiency in air-to-air and air-to-ground operations.

**Table 16. Significant Findings**

Significant Findings
<b>1. The current force posture does not provide sufficient US Air Force presence in Southeast Asia to meet assurance and deterrence objectives.</b>
<b>2. MOBs are lucrative targets for adversary missile systems.</b>
<b>3. A MOB-only construct is not, by its nature, resilient against A2/AD threats. Additional expenditures for active and passive defense are necessary to boost resilience.</b>
<b>4. Austere fields achieve a moderate level of resilience through dispersal, which is possible due to their relatively low operating costs.</b>
<b>5. Austere fields are much less efficient and effective without MOBs to keep them supplied.</b>
<b>6. The cost-savings achieved by closing MOBs are minimal as long as the forces remain active within the USAF.</b>
<b>7. Closing MOBs in the WPTO would hurt partnerships and could snowball into a significant loss of influence in the region.</b>
<b>8. Basing postures alone do not provide the ability to perform AIMT or MAS as part of a CDDI strategy. Greater dispersal helps, but more training and equipment are needed for PACAF.</b>

Source: Author's Original Work.

The Posture Analysis Construct provides a comprehensive framework for the assessment of posture alternatives. The analysis provided in this chapter answers the question, “What is the optimal posture for the USAF in the Asia-Pacific?” A single recommendation represents the central argument of this study. *PACAF should augment its existing main operating bases by adopting the blended posture outlined in Alternative*

*5, a plan that calls for maintaining at least an intermittent presence on austere fields in Southeast Asia.* This arrangement maintains the robust presence already ensconced in Northeast Asia. It also provides assurance and deterrence for Southeast Asia, a region where American land-based airpower is conspicuously absent. The updated posture provides an infrastructure that enables tactical aircraft to comfortably operate in the four potential conflict areas considered the most threatening. Austere fields and rotational forces allow for a gradual transition that demonstrates resolve while minimizing the overall effect on the US-China security dilemma.

### **Summary**

The analysis of alternatives reinforces a timeless truth. All strategic choices have positive and negative effects. A strategist's duty is to identify the alternative possessing the greatest net positive value. For PACAF, a posture that blends main operating bases and austere fields represents the next logical step in its strategic development. MOBs in Guam and Northeast Asia should remain intact. In Southeast Asia, PACAF should establish a presence at austere fields as soon as practical. This presence should be unpredictable and dispersed across multiple locations.

## Conclusions

This study set out to answer a single question: What is the optimal posture for the US Air Force in the Asia-Pacific? The analysis reasons from the general to the specific. It begins with a description of the strategic environment, including the geography, the economics, and the relevant history of the region. After establishing the strategic context, the study journeys through international relations theory to ascertain the most likely national-policy options. Next, it presents the military goals and objectives established by the leadership at the DOD, PACOM, and PACAF. The author offers an original decision-making model called the Posture Analysis Construct, which provides a mathematical framework that lends structure and rigor to the art of strategy. The argument concludes by answering the research question using the PAC to analyze posture alternatives and developing a cogent recommendation for PACAF.

Chapter 1, “Challenges to America’s Enduring Interests in the Pacific,” describes the geography, economics, and pertinent history of the strategic environment. Land-based aircraft are challenged by a region located thousands of miles from the American mainland and dominated by an open ocean. Despite the distance, the US has extensive interests in the region. The United States trades more with Asia than any other region on the planet. The interests are not only economic. Security agreements tie America to eight Pacific partners: Australia, Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia. Furthermore, the Taiwan Relations Act commits the United States to assisting the people of Taiwan. Humanitarian concerns factor in as well. USAF aircraft play a major role in disaster-relief missions. Perhaps the most important consideration is the rise of China. The Chinese economy has rapidly expanded over the last three decades. Economic expansion has led to growth in the Chinese military forces. Other regional players are concerned about this growth, which seems to influence many of the strategic calculations in the region. China also factors into the analysis of each of the four potential conflict areas in the Asia Pacific. Those conflict areas are Taiwan, the Korean Peninsula, the East China Sea, and the South China Sea.

Chapter 2, “US Grand Strategy for the Asia-Pacific Region,” examines different visions of American grand strategy for the Asia-Pacific. International relations theory

presents three primary options: deep engagement, offshore balancing, and containment. The strategy of deep engagement is rooted in liberal IR theory. Offshore balancing and containment have their roots in separate branches of realism. All three have different strengths. Deep engagement provides assurance to allies and deterrence to would-be aggressors. It also seeks to shape China's rise to induce its leaders to choose to join the Western free-market system of institutions. Offshore balancing reduces the American financial burden and passes security responsibilities to other regional partners. Its proponents also believe it provides America more maneuvering room to avoid costly and undesirable wars. Containment is a more assertive policy that uses a greater forward presence to deter potential adversaries or, if deterrence fails, to win wars. Complete acuity about future policy is impossible. Therefore, this chapter bounds the range of grand-strategic policies a PACAF posture might be required to support. This consideration is important to the analysis because basing arrangements represent expensive long-term projects, while national policies fluctuate. The recommended posture should preserve flexibility for future strategists.

Chapter 3, "Pacific Military Strategy and the Posture Analysis Construct," serves two roles. First, it describes the goals for American military involvement in the region. Second, it presents a construct for evaluating basing and capabilities options. The PAC ties together American aspirations at the political and military level to establish evaluative criteria for assessing posture alternatives. Strategic military guidance, academic analyses, and an original theater-specific warfighting strategy called Counter-Denial/Distant-Interdiction are the sources used to develop the PAC system. Theater posture objectives emerge from these sources to form the basic criteria used to score posture alternatives. There are six TPOs: (1) Build strong relationships. (2) Maintain an assured presence. (3) Communicate USPACOM intent and resolve to safeguard US interests. (4) Ensure readiness to fight and win. (5) Attenuate the US-China Security Dilemma. (6) Operate within a realistic budget. The PAC system assesses the value and flexibility of force posture alternatives.

Chapter 4, "Force Posture Analysis," analyzes five distinct basing alternatives and then recommends a course of action. The alternatives identified focused on the Western Pacific theater of operations because that area contains all four potential conflict areas.

The first two alternatives are MOB-only concepts. Alternative 1 is to maintain the *status quo*. All Air Force assets in the Pacific remain in their present locations and units continue to train and equip in accordance with existing plans. Alternative 2 amends the status quo posture by adding another MOB in Southeast Asia. Alternatives 3 and 4 close all Pacific MOBs currently on foreign soil and replace them with small austere bases. Only MOBs on US territory remain open. Alternative 3 withdraws all USAF combat forces to US territory. Alternative 4 uses rotational forces at the austere bases to maintain US regional presence in partner nations. Alternative 5, the hybrid solution, utilizes main operating bases in Northeast Asia and Guam while pursuing dispersed, austere bases in Southeast Asia.

The author scored the five alternatives using the PAC and made the following observations. Alternative 1, the status quo, provides assured presence and enables strong relationships with key partners in Northeast Asia. The posture is also surprisingly cost effective. The premium to have Air Force wings operate in the current Asia-Pacific distribution rather than the CONUS is small. However, the absence of significant presence in Southeast Asia is detrimental to both deterrence and readiness. Up to this point, the smaller countries in Southeast Asia have not formed a balancing coalition sufficient to discourage China from engaging in aggressive behavior in the resource-rich South China Sea. Even if they were to cooperate with one another, it is unlikely they would have sufficient resources to deter China without outside assistance. Alternative 1's all-MOB posture is also susceptible to A2/AD attacks. The concentration of a large number of assets at a small number of bases presents a lucrative target for a potential adversary's missiles.

Alternative 2 modified the status quo by adding a MOB in Southeast Asia. The costs of a new MOB and its potential to exacerbate the US-China security dilemma detract from its overall score. Similar to the first alternative, its reliance on MOBs makes it susceptible to A2/AD attacks. This alternative appears to be inferior to Alternative 1 except in a situation in which containment is necessary because China is growing openly aggressive.

Alternative 3 represented a dramatic change in US basing strategy. It represents a quintessential offshore-balancing approach. All US forces on foreign territory would

relocate to US territory and all MOBs on foreign soil would close. The US would instead maintain austere fields for contingency use only. This alternative did not score well. The move could initiate a destabilizing power vacuum. American allies would undoubtedly feel abandoned. Projected budget savings were modest. The marginal cost incurred for operating a USAF fighter wing at an overseas location in the Pacific rather than the CONUS is only 4 percent. RAND's researchers assert, "a U.S. Air Force of a given size and capability will cost essentially the same regardless of where in the world it is based."<sup>14</sup> Although it achieved modest budget savings, the alternative's scores were the lowest overall because the move severely undermined US influence in the Asia-Pacific.

Alternative 4 is similar to Alternative 3 inasmuch as it uses only austere fields in the Western Pacific. In contrast to Alternative 3, it does include forward-deployed forces on a regular basis. The forces, however, are rotational rather than permanently assigned such as the ones used in the first two alternatives. Alternative 4 increases resilience to A2/AD attacks by dispersing forces across a larger web of austere fields. Despite the improvements in resilience, this alternative still did not outscore the status quo. Operating from austere fields is less efficient than operating from MOBs. The increase in operating costs may be acceptable in times of war but is less palatable during peacetime. In wartime, logistical challenges arising from operating without MOBs offset the gains in deterrence and warfighting readiness provided by austere fields. It is possible to provide logistical support, but the inefficiencies limit combat effectiveness. Alternative 4 is also likely to damage strategic partnerships because closing MOBs indicates a decrease in commitment. Allies and partners may be tempted to hedge their security by pursuing ties with China as well.

Alternative 5 received the highest scores from the Posture Analysis Construct. This option uses a blend of MOBs and austere bases. Land-based aircraft operating from austere fields in Southeast Asia supplement the present MOB structure. The observations regarding this alternative were mostly positive. First, relationships in Southeast Asia are strengthened without diminishing strong partnerships in Northeast Asia. Second, new austere fields communicate US resolve in an area that is currently underserved. Third,

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14. Patrick Mills et al., *A Cost Analysis of the U.S. Air Force Overseas Posture: Informing Strategic Choices* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2013), 27.



the posture is more resilient to A2/AD attacks and thus enhances deterrence by preserving a timely, conventional, second-strike capability. Fourth, the return of US forces to Southeast Asia restores offense-defense balance, thereby attenuating the security dilemma in one way. Although the move could elicit a Chinese response, proper execution of Alternative 5 would minimize such a response. The approach should help restore stability and encourage local actors to resolve disputes through peaceful negotiations.

Chapter 4 also included eight findings. First, the current MOB posture does not provide sufficient US Air Force presence in Southeast Asia to meet assurance and deterrence objectives. Second, MOBs are lucrative targets for adversary missile systems. Third, a MOB-only construct is vulnerable to A2/AD threats. Additional expenditures for active and passive defense are necessary to boost resilience. Fourth, austere fields achieve a moderate level of resilience through dispersal, which is possible due to their relatively low operating costs. Fifth, austere fields are much less efficient and effective without MOBs to keep them supplied. Sixth, the cost-savings achieved by closing MOBs are minimal as long as the forces remain active within the USAF. Seventh, closing MOBs in the WPTO would hurt partnerships and could snowball into a significant loss of influence in the region. Finally, basing postures alone do not provide the ability to perform AIMT or MAS as part of a CDDI strategy. Greater dispersal helps, but more training and equipment are needed for PACAF forces to prepare for this potential missions. The final finding is not unique to any specific alternative. All five alternatives are neutral when it comes to supporting maritime operations. This neutrality, however, does not imply that PACAF forces are prepared for missions such as AIMT and MAS. Although the USAF has specialized in strikes against land-based targets in the recent past, many scenarios in the Pacific could call for strikes against maritime targets and prohibit attacks on the home territory of an adversary. The Counter-Denial/Distant-Interdiction strategy presented in Chapter 3 potentially resembles the initial American response to a contingency in the Asia-Pacific.

The central argument of this thesis is summarized in a single recommendation: *PACAF should augment its existing main operating bases by adopting the blended posture outlined in Alternative 5, a plan that calls for maintaining at least an intermittent*

*presence on austere fields in Southeast Asia.* If China is “salami slicing” in the South China Sea, the US should imagine itself slicing the other side of the salami. It should take small, incremental steps that gradually reintroduce American presence to the area. A small number of forces should rotate through austere fields for partnership-building exercises. As time passes, the presence could increase or decrease in strength and frequency in response to the actions by other regional actors. This change in American presence should restore stability and ensure America is able to extend its tactical-airpower reach to the four most threatening potential conflict areas in the Asia-Pacific.

Perhaps the most positive attribute of the PAC is that its use can be iterative. Alternative 5 appears to be the best type of approach, but there are many possible variations of Alternative 5. The next round of analysis could evaluate what number of austere bases is needed or what specific locations should be within Southeast Asia. Each iteration further refines the solution.

A number of reasonable suggestions follow from the adoption of Alternative 5. Preliminary analysis indicates these are logical steps, but further research is advisable. First, PACAF should continue its efforts to make current MOBs more resilient through passive means such as hardening of facilities. PACOM should also acquire sufficient THAADs to protect MOBs from an initial wave of missile attacks. Second, PACAF should prepare to disperse assets in forward MOBs to nearby airfields at the first indication of an impending attack. Ideally, the fields would be within the THAADs protective umbrella. Air Force units should also train in dispersal operations. Third, PACAF should expand the use of decoys for passive defense. Decoys are effective for increasing ambiguity and deceiving potential adversaries. Fourth, avoid the addition of a MOB in Southeast until a thorough analysis is conducted on the probable implications of such a step for the US-China security dilemma. Even if the security-dilemma implications are acceptable, PACAF leadership may consider further delaying the establishment of a new MOB until it can be protected with a THAAD.

There are many subsets of strategy. Warfighting schemes, contingency planning, and technology innovations naturally receive more attention than posture planning; but posture planning may be the most important of all because it can directly contribute to the prevention of war. Basing arrangements should never be taken for granted. Force

presentation is the most tangible form of strategic communication. Actions speak louder than words. Presence reassures allies and communicates resolve to adversaries. When used properly, force posture protects interests and prevents war. A recent assertion from two of PACAF's premier strategists provides the perfect closing, "Preventing a war in the Asia-Pacific is paramount to being prepared to win a war in the region."<sup>15</sup>



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15. Brig Gen Steven Basham and Maj Nelson Rouleau, "A Rebalance Strategy for Pacific Air Forces: Flight Plan to Runways and Relationships," *Air & Space Power Journal*, February 2015, 17.

## Appendix A

### Abbreviations

A2/AD	anti-access/area denial
AAR	air-to-air refueling
ADIZ	air defense identification zone
AEF	air expeditionary force
AIMT	air interdiction of maritime targets
AOC	air operations center
AOR	area of responsibility
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASW	anti-submarine warfare
ATO	air tasking order
BCA	Budget Control Act
CBO	Congressional Budget Office
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CDDI	counter-denial/distant-interdiction
CJCS	Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
CONUS	continental United States
DOD	Department of Defense
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)
FOB	forward operating base
FOL	forward operating location
HADR	humanitarian assistance and disaster relief
HNS	host-nation support
IAMD	integrated air and missile defense
ICBM	intercontinental ballistic missile
JOAC	joint operational access concept
MAS	maritime air support
MOB	main operating base
NCA	national command authority

NSS	National Security Strategy
PAC	Posture Analysis Construct
PACAF	Pacific Air Forces
PACOM	Pacific Command
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLAAF	People's Liberation Army Air Force
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROC	Republic of China (Taiwan)
ROK	Republic of Korea (South Korea)
SAC	Second Artillery Corps
SAM	surface-to-air missile
SLOC	sea lines of communication
SRBM	short-range ballistic missile
TOA	total obligation authority
TPO	theater posture objective
TSC	theater security cooperation
TTPI	Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands
US	United States
USAF	United States Air Force
USN	United States Navy
USPACOM	United States Pacific Command
WPTO	Western Pacific theater of operations

## Appendix B

### Complete PAC Scorecards

Posture Alternative #1				MOB-Only Theater (No NE Asia MOB)		Raw Score	Offshore Balancing		Deep Engagement		Containment		Hybrid/Offense/Defense		
				Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score		
TPO#1				Build Strong Relationships											
				Supporting Goals		Remarks									
Address Shared Threats				Weak in S. China Sea, otherwise good. (Weak)		7	5	35	2	14	2	14	4	28	
Secure Access to the Region				NE Asia (+) SE Asia (-)											
Facilitate Freedom of Movement				NE Asia (+) SE Asia (-)											
Pre-arrange for OBS & Geographic Distribution				Limited distribution in SE Asia (Weak)											
Enable Theater Security Cooperation				NE Asia (+) SE Asia Neutral (-)											
Advance Common Interests				NE Asia (+) SE Asia Neutral (-)											
IAMD & Passive Defense				Requires additional expenditures (-)											
Provide Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief				Neutral (-)											
Keep allies/partners committed to Western institutions				Positive only for closest allies (Weak)											
TPO#2				Maintain an Assured Presence											
				Supporting Goals		Remarks									
Maintain Political Sustainability of Strategic Anchor Network				Positive for NE Asia only (Weak)		7	1	7	5	35	4	28	4	28	
Ensure Protection of Critical Defense Infrastructure				Some protection but could be enhanced (Weak)											
Provide IAMD/Resiliency				Resiliency possible but could add cost (Weak)											
Active Defense				Possible with more THAADs, etc. (Weak)											
Passive Defense				Possible with decoys & hardening (Weak)											
Geographic Distribution				MOB across region has advantages (+)											
Enable Peacetime Sustainment				Positive (+)											
Use of forces from inside & outside the region to signal to partners				In-region forces & assistance to outside forces (+)											
Keep allies/partners committed to Western institutions				Positive for NE Asia only (Weak)											
TPO#3				Communicate US PACOM Intent and Resolve to Safeguard US Interests											
				Supporting Goals		Remarks									
Present Power Projection Capability				MOB alone is not counter A2/AD (Weak)		7	1	7	4	28	4	28	3	21	
Provide Effects Inside A2/AD Environment				Tougher - adversaries have fewer targets (-)											
Provide IAMD/Resiliency				Resiliency possible but could add cost (Weak)											
Active Defense				Possible with more THAADs, etc. (Weak)											
Passive Defense				Possible with decoys & hardening (Weak)											
Geographic Distribution				MOB across region has advantages (+)											
Effective Reach to Potential Conflict Areas				Effective reach for but could be (Weak)											
Korean Peninsula				Positive (+)											
East China Sea				Positive (+)											
Taiwan				Positive (+)											
South China Sea				Negative (-)											
Shape Chinese Alternatives to Favor Integration in Western Order				Closes ties with other Asian powers (Weak)											
TPO#4				Ensure Readiness to Fight and Win											
				Supporting Goals		Remarks									
Provide IAMD/Resiliency				Resiliency possible but could add cost (Weak)		6	1	6	3	18	5	30	2	12	
IAMD through Attack Operations				Neutral, training/equipment dependent (-)											
Active Defense				Possible with more THAADs, etc. (Weak)											
Passive Defense				Possible with decoys & hardening (Weak)											
Provide Foundation for Sustainable Logistical Support				Positive for NE Asia only (Weak)											
Effective Command and Control				Positive (+)											
Prepare for Power Projection				Somewhat beneficial (Weak)											
Locate/Target/Suppress Hostile A2/AD (ISR, Precision Strike, IAR)				Weak in SE Asia, Strong in NE Asia (Weak)											
Interdict enemy forces and materiel				Mostly good, tough in SE Asia (Weak)											
Provide IAMD and MAS				Neutral, training/equipment dependent (-)											
Deep Strike Capability				More launch options (Weak)											
Effectively Reach to Potential Conflict Areas				Good except S. China Sea (Weak)											
TPO#5				Attenuate US-China Security Dilemma											
				Supporting Goals		Remarks									
Pursue Defense-Defense Balance				Maintains state initially favoring PRC off. (Weak)		5	5	25	2	10	2	10	2	10	
Technology				Neutral, depends on forces allocated (-)											
Geography				Favors Chinese offense (-)											
Pursue Defense-Defense Differentiation				Neutral, depends on forces allocated (-)											
Avoid signaling an aggressive posture toward China				Neutral (-)											
TPO#6				Operate within a Realistic Budget											
				Supporting Goals		Remarks									
Minimize Total Costs				Neutral, only slightly more than CONUS basing (-)		8	5	40	2	16	1	8	3	24	
Pursue Host Nation Support (HNS) from Regional Partners				Positive (+)											
Minimize Costs Relative to CONUS Basing				Neutral (-)											
				Statistical Data		Raw Total	40	Weighted Total	120	Weighted Total	121	Weighted Total	118	Weighted Total	123
Range				5											
Variance				4.33											
Average Across All Strategies				120.5											

#### Observations:

1. Alternative 1 provides assured presence in Northeast Asia.
2. The absence of a significant presence in Southeast Asia is detrimental to deterrence and readiness.
3. MOB's are not, by their nature, resilient against A2/AD tactics.
4. Alternative 1 is surprisingly cost effective.
5. Alternative 1 slightly favors the hybrid strategy of deep engagement and offshore balancing, but is sufficiently flexible to work well for other strategies.

Posture Alternative #2		MOB-Only Theater (With SE Asia MOB)		Raw Score	Offshore Balancing		Deep Engagement		Containment		Hybrid/Deep Eng./D/S		
					Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	
TPO #1 Build Strong Relationships				8	5	40	2	16	2	16	4	32	
Supporting Goals		Remarks											
Address Shared Threats		Positive (+)											
Secure Access to the Region		Neutral (N) Political Instability in SE Asia uncertain (-)											
Facilitate Freedom of Movement		Positive (+)											
Pre-arrange for OBS & Geographic Distribution		Geographic Distribution / Forward MOBs (+)											
Enable Theater Security Cooperation		Positive (+)											
Advance Common Interests		Positive (+)											
IAM/D Passive Defense		Just adds one more large target (complex -)											
Provide Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief		Positive (+)											
Keep Allies/Partners Committed to Western Institutions		Positive (+)											
TPO #2 Maintain an Assured Presence				8	1	8	5	40	4	32	4	32	
Supporting Goals		Remarks											
Maintain Political Sustainability of Strategic Anchor Network		NEI (+), Political Sustainability in SE Asia uncertain (-)											
Ensure Protection of Critical Defense Infrastructure		Some protection but could be enhanced (weak +)											
Provide IAM/D Resiliency		Resiliency possible but add cost (weak +)											
Active Defense		Possible with more HAADs, etc. (weak +)											
Passive Defense		Possible with decoys & hardening (weak +)											
Geographic Distribution		MOB across region has advantages (+)											
Enable Peacetime Sustainment		Positive (+)											
Use forces from inside & outside the region to signal to partners		In-region forces & assistance to outside forces (+)											
Keep Allies/Partners Committed to Western Institutions		Positive (+)											
TPO #3 Communicate US PACOM Intent and Resolve to Safeguard US Interests				7	1	7	4	28	4	28	3	21	
Supporting Goals		Remarks											
Present Power/Projection Capability		MOBs alone do not counter A2/AD (weak +)											
Provide Effects Inside A2/AD Environment		Tough since adversaries have fewer targets (-)											
Provide IAM/D Resiliency		Resiliency possible but add cost (weak +)											
Active Defense		Possible with more HAADs, etc. (weak +)											
Passive Defense		Possible with decoys & hardening (weak +)											
Geographic Distribution		MOB across region has advantages (weak +)											
Effectively Reach to Potential Conflict Areas		Positive (+)											
Korean Peninsula		Positive (+)											
East China Sea		Positive (+)											
Taiwan		Positive (+)											
South China Sea		Positive (+)											
Shape Chinese Alternatives to Favor Integration in Western Order		Uncertain, addition of SE Asia MOB provoke China (-)											
TPO #4 Ensure Readiness to Fight and Win				8	1	8	3	24	5	40	2	16	
Supporting Goals		Remarks											
Provide IAM/D Resiliency		Resiliency possible but add cost (weak +)											
IAM/D through Attack Operations		Neutral, training/equipment dependent (-)											
Active Defense		Possible with decoys & hardening (weak +)											
Passive Defense		Possible with decoys & hardening (weak +)											
Provide Foundation for Sustainable Logistical Support		Positive (+)											
Effective Command and Control		Positive (+)											
Prepare for Power Projection		Somewhat beneficial (weak +)											
Locate/Target/Suppress/Hostile A2/AD (ISR, Prec Strike, IAR)		Helps IAR, otherwise tapes & pdnt. (weak +)											
Interdict Enemy Forces and Materiel		Geographically broad interdiction options (+)											
Provide IANT and IAS		Neutral, training/equipment dependent (-)											
Deep Strike Capability		More launch options (weak +)											
Effectively Reach to Potential Conflict Areas		All potential conflict areas reachable (+)											
TPO #5 Attenuate US-China Security Dilemma				2	5	10	2	4	2	4	2	4	
Supporting Goals		Remarks											
Pursue Defense-Defense Balance		Kadena MOB favors diff., SE Asia uncertain (-)											
Technology		Neutral, depends on forces allocated, etc. (-)											
Geography		Pos., SE Asia MOB far from mainland China (-)											
Pursue Defense-Defense Differentiation		Neutral, depends on forces allocated, etc. (-)											
Avoid signaling an aggressive posture toward China		New MOB likely to be inflammatory (strong +)											
TPO #6 Operate within a Realistic Budget				2	5	10	2	4	1	2	3	6	
Supporting Goals		Remarks											
Minimize Total Costs		Significant budget increase (-)											
Pursue Host Nation Support (HNS) from Regional Partners		SE Asian states have low ability to provide HNS (-)											
Minimize Costs Relative to CONUS Basing		Negative (-)											
Statistical Data				Raw Total	35	Weighted Total	83	Weighted Total	116	Weighted Total	122	Weighted Total	111
Range													
Variance													
Average Cross All													
Create one													

## Observations:

1. The presence of forces in Southeast Asia enhances the scores for each of the first four posture objectives.
2. The susceptibility of MOBs to A2/AD tactics limits Alternative 2's ability to ensure readiness to fight and win.
3. Adding a new MOB in Southeast Asia has the potential to inflame the US-China security dilemma.
4. The costs associated with the new MOB outweigh its gains except in a scenario that favors a containment strategy.



Posture Alternative#3	TheaterWideAustereBasing#2		RawScore (1-10)	OffshoreBalancing		DeepEngagement		Containment		HybridEngage/Def			
	WithdrawForces			Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score		
TPO#1	Build Strong Relationships		3	5	15	2	6	2	6	4	12		
Supporting Goals		Remarks											
Address Shared Threats		Low commitment level (-)											
Secure Access to the Region		Flexible access but no assured access (weak)											
Facilitate Freedom of Movement		Positive (+)											
Pre-arrange for FOBs & Geographic Distribution		Positive (+)											
Enable Theater Security Cooperation		Neutral, bases for exercises but no presence (-)											
Advance Common Interests		Neutral, limited advancement in peacetime (-)											
IAMD & Passive Defense		Not applicable in peacetime forces withdrawn (-)											
Provide Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief		HADR access normally not an issue (weak)											
Keep allies/partners committed to Western institutions		Closest allies will feel abandoned (strong)											
TPO#2	Maintain an Assured Presence		2	1	2	5	10	4	8	4	8		
Supporting Goals		Remarks											
Maintain Political Sustainability & Strategic Anchor Network		Withdrawing forces large negative impact (-)											
Ensure Protection of Critical Defense Infrastructure		Minimal infrastructure to protect (-)											
Provide IAMD/Resiliency		Not applicable in peacetime forces withdrawn (-)											
Active Defense		N/A											
Passive Defense		N/A											
Geographic Distribution		N/A											
Enable Peacetime Sustainment		Poor support for peacetime theater ops (-)											
Use of forces from inside & outside the region to signal to partners		More challenging for enduring presence (-)											
Keep allies/partners committed to Western institutions		Negative, but commitment to closest allies (-)											
TPO#3	Communicate US PACOM Intent and Resolve to Safeguard US Interests		2	1	2	4	8	4	8	3	6		
Supporting Goals		Remarks											
Present Power Projection Capability		Withdrawn forces show lack of resolve (-)											
Provide Effects Inside R2/AD Environment		No forces in theater anti-access/high threat											
Provide IAMD/Resiliency		Not applicable in peacetime forces withdrawn (-)											
Active Defense		N/A											
Passive Defense		N/A											
Geographic Distribution		N/A											
Effectively Reach to Potential Conflict Areas		Weak (negative (-))											
Korean Peninsula		Empty FOBs signal some intent but mostly shows lack of commitment. Ability to overcome anti-access threat is questionable with no forces in theater during peacetime.											
East China Sea													
Taiwan													
South China Sea													
Shape Chinese alternatives to favor integration in Western order (negative (-))													
TPO#4	Ensure Readiness to Fight and Win		4	1	4	3	12	5	20	2	8		
Supporting Goals		Remarks											
Provide IAMD/Resiliency		Weak positive for wartime ops (+)											
IAMD through attack operations		Forward basing helps (+)											
Active Defense		Active BMD unlikely for FOB system (-)											
Passive Defense		Positive (+)											
Provide Foundation for Sustainable Logistics Support		Negative, MoB needed to facilitate logistics (-)											
Effective Command and Control		More challenging but likely possible (-)											
Prepare for Power Projection		Weak positive (+)											
Locate/target/suppress hostile R2/AD (ISR, Prec Strike, IAR)		Neutral (-)											
Interdict enemy forces and materiel		Closer location is positive											
Provide IMT and IMAS		Neutral, training/equipment dependent (-)											
Deep Strike Capability		Closer location is positive											
Effectively Reach to Potential Conflict Areas		Reach improved, effectiveness questionable (-)											
TPO#5	Attenuate US-China Security Dilemma		6	5	30	2	12	2	12	2	12		
Supporting Goals		Remarks											
Pursue Defense-Defense Balance		Withdrawal favors Chinese off. in conflict areas (-)											
Technology		Tech is neutral but US force withdrawal geographically favors Chinese offense (-)											
Geography													
Pursue Defense-Defense Differentiation		Neutral (-)											
Avoid signaling an aggressive posture toward China		Positive (+)											
TPO#6	Operate within a Realistic Budget		8	5	40	2	16	1	8	3	24		
Supporting Goals		Remarks											
Minimize Total Costs		Slight decrease in operating costs (weak)											
Pursue Host Nation Support (HNS) from Regional Partners		HNS unlikely (-)											
Minimize Costs Relative to CONUS Basing		Forces in CONUS, Guam, HI withdrawn (-)											
Statistical Data			Raw Total	25		Weighted Total	93		Weighted Total	64			
Range			31		202.92		72.25		72.25		72.25		
Variance			202.92		72.25		72.25		72.25		72.25		
Average Across All Strategies			72.25		72.25		72.25		72.25		72.25		

## Observations:

1. Withdrawing forces harms relationships with allies and partners, communicates a lack of resolve to protect interests, and decreases readiness to fight.
2. Alternative 3's predominantly austere base posture poses major challenges for logistics as well as command and control (C2).
3. Alternative 3 achieves its highest scores from modest budget savings and its ability to attenuate the US-China security dilemma.

Posture Alternative #4	Theater Wide Austere Basing		Raw Score	Offshore Balancing		Deep Engagement		Containment		Hybrid/Deep Eng./ID/S3		
	Rotate Forces			Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	
TPO#1	Build Strong Relationships		6	5	30	2	12	2	12	4	24	
Supporting Goals		Remarks										
Address Shared Threats		Enables Greater Geographic Access to Threats (+)										
Secure Access to the Region		Flexible Access but Less Assured Access (weak)										
Facilitate Freedom of Movement		Positive (+)										
Pre-arrange for FOBs & Geographic Distribution		Positive (+)										
Enable Theater Security Cooperation		Positive, Bases and Forces for Exercises (+)										
Advance Common Interests		Lower Level of Commitment, More Distribution (-)										
IA/MD/Passive Defense		Positive (+)										
Provide Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief		Weak Positive, Access Normally Not an Issue (+)										
Keep Allies/Partners Committed to Western Institutions		Weak Negative Commitment to Allies (-)										
TPO#2	Maintain an Assured Presence		4	1	4	5	20	4	16	4	16	
Supporting Goals		Remarks										
Maintain Political Sustainability of Strategic Anchor Network		Decreased Support of Strategic Anchors (weak)										
Ensure Protection of Critical Defense Infrastructure		Minimal Infrastructure to Protect (-)										
Provide IAMD/Resiliency		Allies likely to expect improved resiliency (weak)										
Active Defense		Negative (-)										
Passive Defense		Positive (+)										
Geographic Distribution		Positive (+)										
Enable Peacetime Sustainment		Poor Support for Peacetime Theater Ops (-)										
Use of Forces from Inside & Outside the Region to Signal to Partners		More challenging for enduring presence (-)										
Keep Allies/Partners Committed to Western Institutions		Weak Negative Commitment to Allies (-)										
TPO#3	Communicate US PACOM Intent and Resolve to Safeguard US Interests		7	1	7	4	28	4	28	3	21	
Supporting Goals		Remarks										
Present Power Projection Capability		Positive (+)										
Provide Effects Inside A2/AD Environment		Positive (+)										
Provide IAMD/Resiliency		Weak Positive (+)										
Active Defense		Active BMD most likely to be prohibitive (-)										
Passive Defense		Positive (+)										
Geographic Distribution		Positive (+)										
Effectively Reach to Potential Conflict Areas		Positive (+)										
Korean Peninsula		Communication of Intent with Only FOBs requires steady rotation of tactical forces through different FOBs. Pricey, logistically challenging & unprecedented but possible.										
East China Sea												
Taiwan												
South China Sea												
Shape Chinese Alternatives to Favor Integration in Western Order		Uncertain, may deter Chinese hostility (weak)										
TPO#4	Ensure Readiness to Fight and Win		6	1	6	3	18	5	30	2	12	
Supporting Goals		Remarks										
Provide IAMD/Resiliency		Weak Positive (+)										
IA/MD through Attack Operations		Active BMD most likely to be prohibitive (-)										
Active Defense		Positive (+)										
Passive Defense		Positive (+)										
Provide Foundation for Sustainable Logistical Support		Negative, MOBS facilitate logistics (-)										
Effective Command and Control		More challenging but likely possible (-)										
Prepare for Power Projection		Weak Positive (+)										
Locate/Target/Suppress Hostile A2/AD (ISR, Prec Strike, IAR)		Neutral (-)										
Interdict Enemy Forces and Material		Closer Location = Positive										
Provide IAMD/Resiliency		Neutral (-)										
Deep Strike Capability		Closer Location = Positive										
Effectively Reach Potential Conflict Areas		Reach Improved, Effectiveness Questionable (-)										
TPO#5	Attenuate US-China Security Dilemma		5	5	25	2	10	2	10	2	10	
Supporting Goals		Remarks										
Pursue Defense-Defense Balance		Positive (+)										
Technology		Neutral (-)										
Geography		Positive Due to Geographic Distribution (+)										
Pursue Defense-Defense Differentiation		Neutral (-)										
Avoid Signaling an Aggressive Posture toward China		Moving Forces Forward in New Areas (-)										
TPO#6	Operate within a Realistic Budget		4	5	20	2	8	1	4	3	12	
Supporting Goals		Remarks										
Minimize Total Costs		Uncertain, Likely Higher Costs Due to Logistics (-)										
Pursue Host Nation Support (HNS) from Regional Partners		Uncertain, Expect Decrease (-)										
Minimize Costs Relative to CONUS Basing		Negative (-)										
Statistical Data			Raw Total	32	Weighted Total	92	Weighted Total	96	Weighted Total	100	Weighted Total	95
Range			8									
Variance			10.92									
Average Across All Strategies			95.75									

## Observations

1. Austere fields can be more resilient than MOBs, so long as they are more numerous.
2. Logistical challenges arising from operating without MOBs offset the gains in deterrence and warfighting readiness provided by the resilient austere-only posture.
3. Replacing MOBs with austere fields decreases the level of assured presence.
4. Strategic relationships suffer from the uncertainty created by perceptions of decreased commitment.
5. Alternative 4 is less advantageous than the status quo in terms of cost savings.
6. Alternative 4 is equal to the status quo in regards to attenuating the security dilemma.

Posture Alternative#5	MOB-Austere Blend	Raw Score	Offshore Balancing		Deep Engagement		Containment		Hybrid/Deep Eng./S&S			
			Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score	Adjustment Factor	Weighted Score		
TPO#1	Build Strong Relationships	8	5	40	2	16	2	16	4	32		
Supporting Goals											Remarks	
Address Shared Threats											Positive (+)	
Secure Access to the Region											More politically viable in sub-regions (++)	
Facilitate Freedom of Movement											Positive (+)	
Pre-arrange for FOBs & Geographic Distribution											Positive (+)	
Enable Theater Security Cooperation											Only detractors to perm. forces in SEA (weak+)	
Advance Common Interests											Positive (+)	
IAMD/Passive Defense											Complicates adversary targeting (weak+)	
Provide Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief											Positive (+)	
Keep allies/partners committed to Western Institutions		Positive (+)										
TPO#2	Maintain an Assured Presence	8	1	8	5	40	4	32	4	32		
Supporting Goals											Remarks	
Maintain Political Sustainability of Strategic Anchor Network											Strongest ties are with Strategic Anchors (+)	
Ensure Protection of Critical Defense Infrastructure											Still room for IAMD improvement (weak+)	
Provide IAMD/Resiliency											Creates diverse problems for adversary (weak+)	
Active Defense											Possible with more THAADs, etc. (weak+)	
Passive Defense											Pos. in SEA, hardening req'd in NEA (weak+)	
Geographic Distribution											Positive (+)	
Enable Peacetime Sustainment											Positive (+)	
Use forces from inside & outside the region to signal to partners											In-region forces & assistance to outside forces (+)	
Keep allies/partners committed to Western Institutions		Positive (+)										
TPO#3	Communicate US PACOM Intent and Resolve to Safeguard US Interests	8	1	8	4	32	4	32	3	24		
Supporting Goals											Remarks	
Present Power Projection Capability											Diverse power projection approaches (weak+)	
Provide Effects Inside A2/AD Environment											Possible, but challenges persist (weak+)	
Provide IAMD/Resiliency											Creates diverse problems for adversaries (weak+)	
Active Defense											Possible with more THAADs, etc. (weak+)	
Passive Defense											Pos. in SEA, hardening req'd in NEA (weak+)	
Geographic Distribution											Positive (+)	
Effectively Reach to Potential Conflict Areas											Effectively Reach to all (++)	
Korean Peninsula											Positive (+)	
East China Sea		Positive (+)										
Taiwan		Positive (+)										
South China Sea		Positive (+)										
Shape Chinese Alternatives to Favor Integration in Western Order		Positive (+)										
TPO#4	Ensure Readiness to Fight and Win	7	1	7	3	21	5	35	2	14		
Supporting Goals											Remarks	
Provide IAMD/Resiliency											Creates diverse problems for adversary (weak+)	
IAMD through Attack Operations											Neutral, training/equipment dependent.	
Active Defense											Possible with more THAADs, etc. (weak+)	
Passive Defense											Pos. in SEA, hardening req'd in NEA (weak+)	
Provide Foundation for Sustainable Logistics Support											Positive (+)	
Effective Command and Control											Good in NE Asia, possible challenge in SE (weak+)	
Prepare for Power Projection											Positive (+)	
Locate/target/suppress hostile A2/AD (ISR, Prec Strike, IAR)											Helps IAR	
Interdict enemy forces and materiel		Facilitated by Bases Across Region (+)										
Provide IJMT and MAS		Neutral, training/equipment dependent (-)										
Deep Strike Capability		Enhanced somewhat by additional bases (+)										
Effectively Reach to Potential Conflict Areas		Positive (+)										
TPO#5	Attenuate US-China Security Dilemma	7	5	35	2	14	2	14	2	14		
Supporting Goals											Remarks	
Pursue Offense-Defense Balance											SEA FOBs appear to favor US def. (weak+)	
Technology											Neutral (-)	
Geography											More advantageous to def in SEA (weak+)	
Pursue Offense-Defense Differentiation		Offense or Defense signaled by presence or absence of forces at FOBs (weak+)										
Avoid signaling an aggressive posture toward China		New FOBs could be highly provoking (weak)										
TPO#6	Operate within a Realistic Budget	7	5	35	2	14	1	7	3	21		
Supporting Goals											Remarks	
Minimize Total Costs											Small costs for FOBs	
Pursue Host Nation Support (HNS) from Regional Partners											HNS in NE Asia, minimal in SEA (weak+)	
Minimize Costs Relative to CONUS Basing		Neutral (-)										
Statistical Data		Raw Total	45	Weighted Total	133	Weighted Total	137	Weighted Total	136	Weighted Total	137	
Range		4										
Variance		3.58										
Average Across All Strategies		135.75										

## Observations

1. Relationships in SE Asia are strengthened without diminishing the strong partnerships in NE Asia.
2. New austere fields facilitate presence and communicate US resolve in an area that is currently underserved.
3. Adversaries engaging in A2/AD tactics face a more distributed, more resilient posture.
4. US presence in Southeast Asia restores offense-defense balance, thereby attenuating the security dilemma.
5. Alternative 5 is nearly budget-neutral because the austere bases already exist and the forces that could rotate through them are already in theater.

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